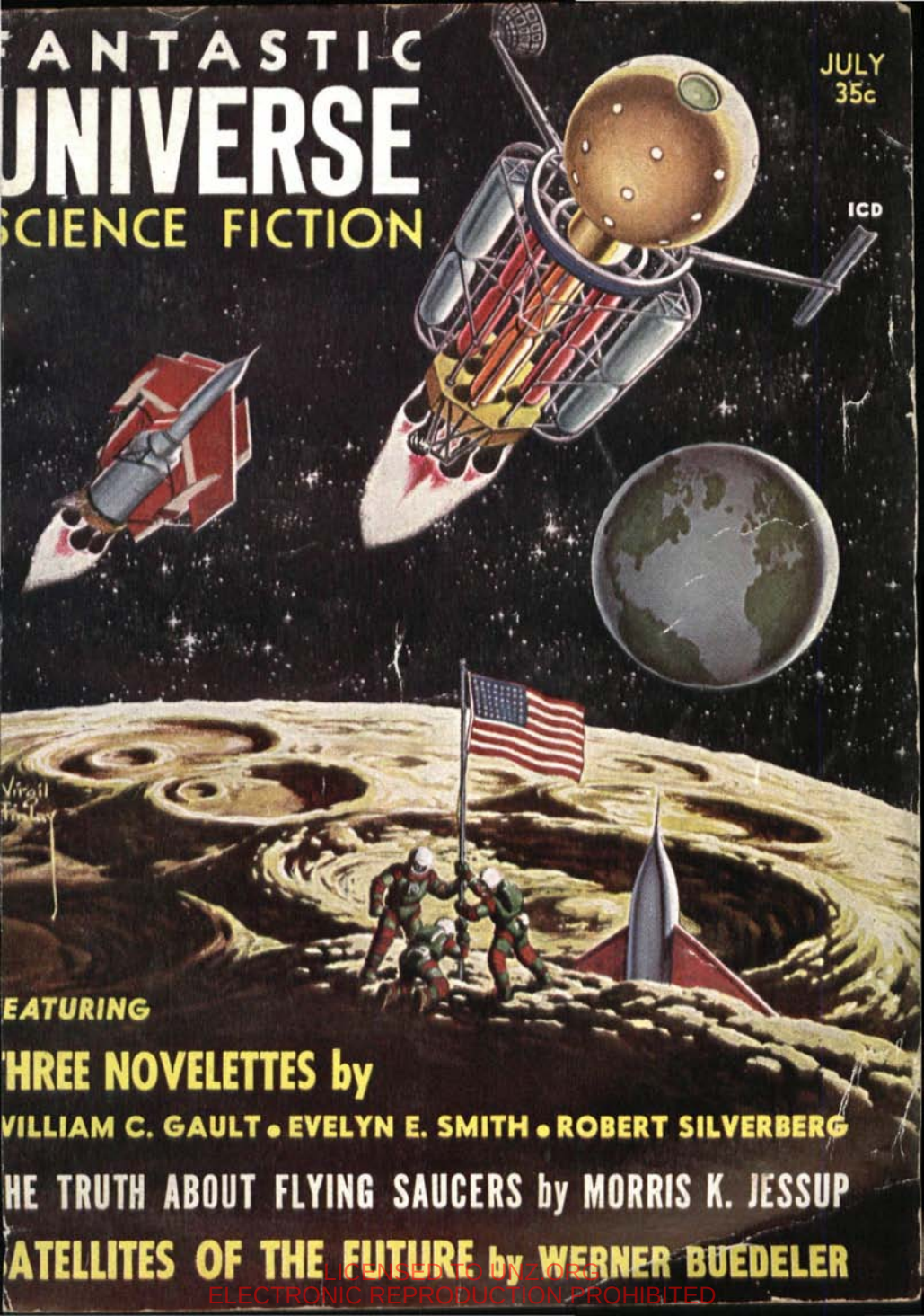

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THE RACE FOR THE MOON

How soon will we reach the Moon?

Army Secretary Wilber M. Brucker, reminded of statements that Russia might beat us to the Moon, has said bluntly that "they'll have to hustle" to get there before we do.

A top Army scientist predicted recently that the United States would fire a rocket "within months" (Secretary Brucker talked of "right soon"), that we would have a man on the Moon by the early 1960's and set up a base there by 1975. "And I'm scared pink I'm being overly pessimistic," continued James B. Edson, assistant director of research and development for Army Secretary Brucker.

Both the United States and Russia are capable, right now, of shooting a rocket on the 4-day, 240,000-mile trip to the Moon, Edson stated. The race would be close. Whichever country controlled the Moon would be able to strike any place on Earth with armed rockets without much fear of retaliation. Hitting the Earth *from* the Moon would be easier than going from the Earth to the Moon. One reason is that the Moon's low gravitational pull (about one-sixth that of the Earth) would permit even relatively weak rockets to make the trip. A second reason is that visibility is always perfect on the Moon, because there is no atmosphere, permitting the better aiming of a missile.

The first rocket fired at the Moon might never actually land there, "but if the rocket goes up and circles the Moon—maybe taking some pictures—and returns here, that would be something different."

"Whoever holds the Moon," Edson concluded, "literally has got the jump on Earth. With this power, a single nation controlling the Moon might be able to end all terrestrial wars."

As Edson points out in an article in the March, 1958 issue of *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*,—"Prevention of exclusive lunar occupation by another power may some day become a major objective of U. S. foreign policy and of our technological effort.

He predicts, in the same article, a development long familiar to Science Fiction readers.

"Meanwhile a spaceborne army may appear. Crack divisions will embark in rocket gliders. They will rise like flying fish above the atmosphere, re-enter, and glide to their destination. They can be in action half the world away within two or three hours after the action order comes. Spaceborne warriors may appear later in other places: satellites, lunar bases, other planets."

In other words, whether we realize it or not, History is fast catching up with Science Fiction! Yesterday's dreams are becoming Today's realities, and Today's dreams will be realities—it seems—in our time. We have come far—very, very, far—within the lifetime of many of us. And we will go further.

What comes next? After we raise our flag on the Moon?

"Mars," replies Edson. "We might get a rocket there in a decade."

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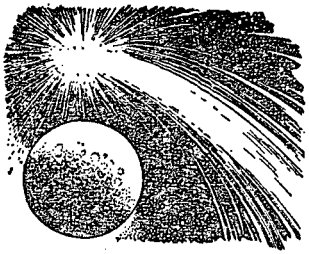

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escape ferocity

by . . . William C. Gault

Where there was life, on this earth, there were new machines. Working, carrying, entertaining — and thinking.

EVEN here, in the flat glare of the Arizona desert, the clanking mechanism of the world he was deserting grated on Lardner's ears. It was a one track line from Phoenix and the chair car he rode in swayed and rattled on its squeaking wheels.

Lardner took two pills from the box in his jacket pocket and went up to the forward part of the car, to the water cooler. He could feel the sweat running down from the backs of his knees and his head throbbed in cadence with the swaying train.

There was a girl at the water cooler, a thin, pale girl with dark, tightly curled hair and eyes of a deep, penetrating blue. She smiled wanly at Joe Lardner.

"Gifford?" she asked.

He nodded. "And you?"

"The same. Is this the *only* way to get there?"

"I suppose we could have walked. Though not through that desert, not in August. Until this— expedition was slated to leave from Gifford, it was only an experimental station, and I guess this transportation was considered adequate for them."

They were all human. They had been and would be so again. William Campbell Gault, who will be remembered for TITLE FIGHT *(in our December 1956 issue) and other stories, describes the move to deport to the stars the fourteen people on the space ship, unbelievers, enemies of the machine.*

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She crumpled the cup in her hand, and Joe reached out to get a fresh one. His hand trembled.

She said, "You're awfully pale. You're—all right, aren't you?"

"I'll make it," he said. "You're a little white, yourself." He popped the pills into his mouth, and took a swallow of water.

She said quietly, "There's a bit of breeze out here on the platform, and it's not much noisier. Ironic, isn't it, that this—this cattle car should be our last conveyance on earth?"

He didn't answer. He said, "Let's go out and get some of that breeze."

Her name, he learned, was Jean Savage, and she'd worked for the Department of Science in Washington.

Feeding the monster, as she called it, preparing data for the new computing marvel Science was so proud of.

"Mr. Think is what the operators called it," she told Joe, "and there were otherwise normal men who claimed it had a mind of its own."

His smile was weary. "You must have half believed them."

The deep blue eyes considered him gravely. "Because I'm here?"

"That's what I meant, yes. I'm sorry. It wasn't a nice thing to say, was it?" He felt better. The breeze and the pills had combined to give him some relief.

"I don't know if it was nice or not," she said listlessly, "but it's true."

The throbbing started again. "Easy, now," Joe said softly.

"I was put on a night shift," she said, "with two other girls. Three of us in that huge, empty office and that—monster clicking, humming, droning, ringing. Its lights flashing and those incredible answers coming off the tapes. Working, *thinking* twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. *Never silent!*"

Her voice broke, and she closed her mouth rigidly.

Joe's head throbbed steadily and the glare off the sand seemed to burn his eyeballs. As far as the eye could see from this archaic contrivance, all the way to the burning horizon, no machines. But no life, either. Where there was life, on this earth, there were now machines. Working machines and carrying machines and entertaining machines—and thinking machines. It wasn't enough that man should relieve his muscles; he must now relieve his brain.

The girl almost whispered, "I'm sorry. I— This is no time for minor hysterics, is it?"

Joe found a smile, somewhere. "We're all human. Or *were*. And will be, again."

"We hope. You know—even this passenger list was chosen by a machine. An RTM Scanner. A *machine* decided who was to make the trip."

"A machine manned by humans," Joe pointed out. His sympathy was stretched to the shrieking

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point; he was beginning to be annoyed with her.

She had taken a cigarette from her jacket pocket now, and Joe reached into his pocket for his lighter.

As he held the flame out to her, both pair of eyes were fixed a moment on the simple little contrivance, and then the girl looked at Joe and began to smile.

He chuckled as he extinguished the flame and threw the lighter far out onto the sand. He brought out a box of matches. "We'll start our new life right now."

The train rattled and squeaked and clanged, but his head seemed better and there was no tremble in the hand that held the match.

The assembly room was the lower floor of a former barrack, and the government man was at a table near the door. The room was stifling, but most of the passengers were here, out of that killing sun.

Jean and Joe gave their names to the man, and he clicked the card scanner to the files so laboriously prepared by Research.

With fourteen passengers, Joe thought, *they still can't work without the machines.* They called it labor saving, but it must have taken ten times the labor to bring that scanner here than it would to handle their files by hand.

He and Jean went over to sit on a faded wicker settee. She said, "Everybody seems to be paired off. Is that just—accidental?"

"Seven men and seven women," Joe said. "All—young enough."

She smiled. "Young enough for breeding? Is that what you meant?"

His answering smile was dim. "That's about it, I guess."

Her voice was light. "You're not married, by chance, Mr. Lardner?"

"I lost my wife six months ago," Joe said harshly.

Silence from her, for seconds. Then, "I'm sorry."

"And both kids," Joe said. He looked at her. There was some color in her thin, intelligent face, now. He looked away.

It must have been minutes later that she asked, "A—machine?"

He looked at the floor, avoiding her eyes. "The only machine within forty miles. I was a Ranger at Redwood National Park and out on a routine check. When I came back to the house, it wasn't there. The refrigeration unit had blown up."

He continued to stare at the floor, and the image began to appear, the flattened house, Judy's little dresses still on the line, his wife's hand still wearing the wedding ring, the blood. . . .

He looked up to find tears on Jean's cheeks.

He looked back at the floor. "Maybe we all ought to be institutionalized. Maybe all fourteen of us are pathological."

"Maybe we are being institutionalized," she said, "in a way. We're being deported, anyway, the unbelievers, the enemies of science."

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"Not science," Joe corrected her. "Machines. And by our own choice. Let's keep it as sane as we can. That Mr. Think has you believing in myths."

"My brother worked in Science, too," she said. "He got me my job there. He worked in Cybernetics. If you think I'm loony, you should hear some of the stories he had to tell. 'Mechanical Malignancy,' they called it. Most frightening, damned things were constantly—"

"Please," Joe said. "That's behind, that's all behind us, now." His voice had risen and the man in the next chair looked over sharply. Joe's voice was lower. "We designed them for our purposes. We conceived them with our brains and put them to work. Evil minds design evil machines, but you have to believe in the mastery of man."

"They don't, in Cybernetics," she said simply. "I'd like a drink, and there's a Coke machine in the corner, I see." She started to rise.

"I'll get 'em," Joe said. "Old fashioned gallantry, you know." His hand rested briefly on her shoulder. "We're going to be all right."

He put a token in the machine, and nothing happened. He slapped the duryllium side of it sharply with the flat of his hand, and still nothing happened.

He put his weight into the kick, and the boom of the contact reverberated in the room. He was conscious of a murmur of voices, and then the spigot began to flow, filling the paper cup he held. He was about to put in another token, when he saw the spigot was still flowing, though the cup was brimming over.

He put another cup under the spigot, and turned to face the rest of them in the room. "Will everyone please get a container of some sort? I think we are temporarily supreme."

They all smiled, and the man who had been sitting on the chair near Joe rose to lead the parade.

Back at the settee, Jean said, "We'll have some laughs on the trip, I see. You're a long way from being defeated, aren't you?"

"Not far," he said, "but I'll be all right if I don't look back and so will you."

"Lot's wife," he said. "And have you managed it?"

"Mostly. We all seem to be here. I wonder when we go."

The government man was standing now near his table, using the table for his block and the flat of his hand for a mallet. "Your attention, please."

When he had their attention, he went on. "You will be quartered on the second floor of this building for tonight. Dinner will be served in this room at six, and the ship will leave tomorrow morning at eight. Any technical questions you might have should be answered by the leaflet you will find in the quarters assigned you. For any other questions, I will be available right up to the moment of your departure."

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Jean said, "A typical government announcement. And what do we do until dinner?"

"Sit here and stew. Or go out and look at the desert. Or I could have another go at the Coke machine. *Now* doesn't matter, Jean." His face was relaxed, his eyes were peaceful. "Tomorrow is what counts."

They went out, after a while, and walked along in the shade of the huge buildings that housed the Department of Agriculture's conversion equipment. For nine years, now, this station had tried to find a way to make the desert arable.

The mountains rimming them to the west were casting their shadows on the hot sand now and there was a slight breeze. To the north, the plain stretched to the horizon.

"I wonder," Jean said, "what Eldora will be like?"

"Nobody's ever been there," Joe said. "You knew that, didn't you?"

"No, I didn't."

"We're—guinea pigs," Joe said. "That's why we're going. There won't even be a crew. We'll be worked by relays out of this galaxy and self determined in Galaxy E. Somebody on board will be trained to take over the landing at Eldora."

"And nobody knows anything about Eldora?"

"Oh, yes, they know all about it, through observation. But nobody has landed there."

They walked for seconds before she asked, "Has anybody tried? Have there been other expeditions?"

Joe took a breath. "None of record. I've heard rumors, but— Oh, I shouldn't be talking like this."

"What kind of rumors did you hear?"

"That it's been the mecca for other—crackpot expeditions."

They were at the end of the street, now, and she stopped to look up at him. "Do you think we're crackpots, Joe?"

"No, the rest of the world is crazy. We're just people licked by machines. Machine age unadaptables."

She looked up at him, and shook her head solemnly. "You phrased that wrong, Joe. We're the people who *won't* be licked by machines. Long after this civilization is gone, we'll have our machine-less civilization on Eldora."

He smiled down at her. "So you're a prophet, too?"

"No," she said. "I'm just a girl who spent a lot of time listening to the boys in Science."

He looked out at the mountains, wondering how much she said was sound and how much the product of her phobia.

"We'll be the first," she went on, "but the others will follow."

It seemed cooler as they walked back. Most of the others were out in the breeze, too, standing in knots along the shaded side of the barrack.

Joe said, "I think I'll take a shower before the rest of them get

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the idea. I'll see you at dinner?"

She smiled. "You surely will. I've been looking over the others, and you're just about the cream."

In the small room assigned to him, he undressed slowly, thinking of this girl he'd met only today, thinking of the things she'd told him.

Something dropped to the floor from his jacket pocket, and he bent over to retrieve it. It was the box of pills and he realized he'd had no desire for them since getting off the train. Despite the heat and the gray-white barrenness stretching out on all sides of them, the desert was restful. And Eldora?

Eldora should be heaven.

The water was hard and tinged with alkali but the beat of it on his sticky body was refreshing. Through the waist-high windows at the end of the shower room, he heard the voices of the others outside. They seemed to be less tense, and occasional laughter brightened the hum of dialogue.

The last best hope off earth, Joe thought. No planet in this galaxy was permanently habitable, and only Eldora in Galaxy E, so far as anyone knew at this time.

Mars was mined by robots; Venus was a remote control relay station for Communication and nothing else.

But why us? Joe thought. *Who picked us? There must have been dozens of other applicants.*

In the washroom he examined his face and decided he didn't need a shave. He put on his robe and straw slippers and went up the steps, feeling cooler, quieter and more hopeful.

In the doorway to his room, he paused, staring.

A man was standing with his back to the door, bending down over Joe's clothes on the chair.

"I beg your pardon?" Joe said, "but—

The man whirled. "I'm—sorry. Is this your—I saw these clothes and couldn't imagine—" He paused. "I'm sure this is the room assigned to me."

He was a stocky man, of medium height, with a square face and a crew haircut. He seemed honest enough to Joe, if appearances meant anything.

Joe said, "7-B? Is that the room you were assigned?"

"No. 7-A. Is this 7-B?"

"It was when I left it," Joe said. He went to the hall and looked up at the number above the door. The number was plainly 7-B.

The man came out to look, and then faced Joe with a wry grin. "I'm sincerely sorry. It must have looked—questionable to you. I hope you'll realize it was a stupid mistake."

"We all make them," Joe said. "It's certainly no time for suspicions." He held out a hand. "Joe Lardner's my name."

The man's grip was strong, his hand calloused. "Curt Mueller's mine. A pleasure, Joe."

It wasn't quite that, to Joe. There

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was something about the man that disturbed him. Maybe, Joe told himself, because he has a mechanic's look. He didn't look like a man who would run from a machine.

At dinner, he sat at the huge table between Jean and a Miss Amy Templeton from Chillicothe. Amy had been in a bus accident, and she had all the details for Joe, complete with sound effects. Sixteen had died, and Amy would never be the same again, not on this earth.

Joe tried to look interested and sympathetic, but the tinge of hysteria in her voice grated on him. He looked around the table, studying the others.

Jean said, "Looking for something?"

Joe smiled. "I'm not committed, yet, because you've staked out your claim. That girl at the end of the table is pretty."

"And very nice, too. I was talking to her in the shower."

"What's her problem?" Joe asked.

"Come again? Oh, you mean why is she here— I can't be sure, but I think she's like me, psychic. I think she sees the machine age coming to its logical fruition."

"You're joking, of course," Joe said.

"Yes, Master, I'm joking. Of course."

To his left, Amy said, "Who's that man next to the pretty girl at the end of the table? Do you know him?"

"I met him," Joe said. "Curt Mueller's his name."

"He gives me the shivers," Amy said.

"Good shivers or bad shivers?"

"I don't like him. He looks like one of those German scientists."

Joe smiled. "One of those *mad* German scientists?"

"No, no, I didn't mean that. I meant he looks scientific, or at least mechanically proficient."

"And how do I look?" Joe asked.

"Outdoorsy. The rough tweed, springer spaniel, briar pipe type."

Jean said, "Easy, Amy. I saw him first."

Joe said, "You girls are taking a typically female view of all this. Don't you realize how historic it is? It's no time for the light touch."

"Whistling in the dark," Jean told him. "That's all, Joe."

Oh, yes, and going out into the big dark, out into the illimitable untenanted, to start a new kind of life on an uninhabited planet known only by observation.

On the plain to the east, the dull duryllium shell of the ship was outlined by the bright desert night. Joe and Jean stood near the rear steps of the barrack, smoking.

Curt Mueller and the girl he'd talked with at dinner came through the doorway and stood for a moment on the porch. He nodded at Joe, and then the girl said something to him, and they came over to where Joe and Jean stood.

The girl's name, Joe learned, was

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Berjouhi Barton. The first name was Armenian; Joe suspected the surname had formerly held an 'ian' ending. Large dark eyes and dark hair and a womanly figure, full bodied but not heavy.

She said, "I thought we all ought to get acquainted. Of course, there will be a lot of time on the ship, won't there?"

Joe nodded. "I hope we're all friends when we land. There's a thing called 'cabin fever,' you know."

Curt laughed. "In the woods, there is. But not, I hope, out among the stars."

Then Amy stood on the porch, outlined by the lighted doorway, and she was not alone. Amy had bagged a Mr. Michael Lynch, a thin and engaging Irishman with reddish hair and a bony, interesting face.

Mike Lynch had no sad stories out of his past, but he was a bit too Pollyanna-ish about his hopes for their bright future. He couldn't see how they could miss.

One way they could miss, Joe thought, was by missing the planet. This was no Pilgrim band, firm, prepared and hardy. This was a near-neurotic group of wishful thinkers trying to escape the machine age.

Include yourself, Joe thought. *You're running away, too, Joe Lardner, running away from a memory.*

They had their physicals that evening, after which most of them turned in.

Joe sat alone on the porch steps, looking out at the stars and the bright plain dominated by the bulky shadow that was the ship. Though there was an uneasiness in him, the pills in his pocket had not been touched since he'd left the train. He felt better than he had in six months and he knew he would sleep well tonight.

His uneasiness was not because of his decision, but because he was doubtful about the staying powers of that portion of the group he had come to know so far. And then he made a reservation in his mind—he shouldn't have any doubts about Curt Mueller; he looked like a man able to cope with the unknown. And about the rest of them, he could be wrong.

The night was chilly, and he stood up, taking a last night-time look at the land of his birth before going up the steps to his room.

In the morning, he was wakened by the clatter of the water-burning tractor hauling the processed food to the ship. The sun was a red rim on the eastern horizon and heat waves danced above the sand.

As he went down to breakfast, he saw the luggage wagon going past and some of the trunks held stickers of foreign travel, Paris, Lucerne, Glasgow, Berlin.

And if they should return from this, for some reason in the unforeseeable future, would they have stickers from Eldora in Galaxy E?

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Municipal thinking in a star seeking age.

There was laughter around the dining table, there were bright faces. There was chatter. Whistling in the dark?

There was a chair empty next to Jean and he took it.

"Good morning, sour puss," she said.

"Good morning. I'm a congenital worrier, and I'm sorry."

She was silent. Then, "I'm the one who should be sorry. I guess you've reason enough to be grave."

"It's only partly that. I've been wondering if this is the kind of group to send out as colonists."

"We're not colonists."

"The government thinks we are, or we wouldn't be going."

"Well, then, a little faith in your fellow humans should be cultivated, Mr. Lardner. Fortitude isn't measured with muscles."

He looked over to see how serious she was, and saw. She was glaring at him.

He smiled at her. "I'll improve. I promise."

Her hand reached out to cover his on the table. She nodded.

He was drinking his coffee when the government man came over with Curt Mueller. He told Joe, "We're going to take you out to the ship now. There are a few things that need to be done on landing, and you and Mr. Mueller will be instructed as to that."

They went out to the huge crefalt ramp, and up the narrow, circular staircase to the passenger cabin. Through the miquart window in here, Joe could see the barrack and the other passengers already getting into a passenger wagon which would be hauled by the same small tractor that had hauled the luggage and the food.

The government man said, "Here is the only control board on the ship," and Joe's attention returned from the plain.

There was a locked cover over the board, and the man gave each one of them a key after unlocking the cover.

When he lifted it, to reveal the board, it was anti-climactic. There were three buttons and a gravi-pulse gauge. The gauge was marked off in red, blue and green sections, to match the color of the buttons.

"The gauge," the man explained, "will go into the green section first, and the small forward decelerators will go on when you press the green button. Additional deceleration will be afforded when you press the blue button on entering the blue zone. The red button turns the landing blasters on, and of course, you press that when the gauge needle enters the red zone. Clear?"

Joe and Curt nodded.

"Repeat it, then, Mr. Lardner."

Joe repeated it, and Curt went through it again.

"Now," the man said, "this is for a comfortable landing. If anything should go wrong with the blue or green stage, the blasters

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will still save you in the red stage, though the safety belts had better be attached if that's necessary. The deceleration will be rapid without the preliminary stages. But that red stage is foolproof."

"I'm glad of that," Curt said, "because I'm a fool when it comes to mechanics."

The man frowned. "Your mechanical aptitude, Mr. Mueller, was the highest in the group."

"But not high," Curt said easily. "What if we are over water as we come down?"

"You won't be over water. You'll be aimed at the biggest plain on the planet. There might be a few rivers there, but none deep enough to cover the ship, I'm sure. And your chances of landing in one are theoretically all but impossible." He borrowed Joe's key, and locked the case, and handed the key back. He smiled. "Luck, gentlemen."

"Thank you," Joe said. "Will we be aware of the two earlier stages of deceleration? Will there be some sound, or something that tells us the mechanism is working?"

"Of course. I should have mentioned that. There will be not only the sound of the mechanism going into action; there will be a definite jolt as the speed drops. You won't miss it. And I wouldn't worry about it. It's about as complicated as a twentieth century mouse trap. There isn't any reason for it to fail, absolutely none."

The passenger wagon was below them, now, and there was the sound of footsteps on the stairs. And chatter. The chatter of a holiday cruise. Joe stood by the miquart window, looking out over the flat, hot, seemingly limitless plain.

This country, too, he thought, had been born of man's dreams, man seeking the intangibles of freedom and justice and a fighting chance. Now dedicated to the elimination of human labor, as though labor was some kind of vice. If we had spent as much time on the elimination of greed and stupidity and bigotry as we had on the elimination of labor, where could we be today?

Perhaps, out there among the stars, on Eldora perhaps, the old dream could be re-born, a new world for the burnishing of old dreams. Perhaps. . . .

Jean stood next to him, now. "Saying good-bye?"

"Saying hello, I hope. To tomorrow."

Below them, there was the sound of the door closing under the terrific pressure of the hydraulic arms, and behind them a lowering in the tempo of the chatter. The significance of the moment was getting through to the magpies.

Jean said, "We can sit together, can't we?"

Joe nodded.

"How about sleeping?" she asked. "I suppose it would be in bad taste to sleep together so soon."

"The seats are also the beds," Joe said. "So—we'll need to ignore the superficial conventions."

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"I want someone close," Jean said. "It's no time to be alone." Her voice trembled, and she put a hand in his. "I'm frightened."

"We all are and we always have been. Let's get a pair of seats." His voice was rough, but he kept her hand in his.

A vibration, a rumble like all the waterfalls in the world emptying into a funneled gorge, a rumble that took command of the cabin. All the faces were tense, Joe saw, all the hands were rigidly gripping the hand rails.

The vibration growing, pressure in the seats, the rumble dying very little. The seats were swivel-mounted and not locked for the take-off; the pressure now was directly beneath them. Once free of gravity, they could be locked and put to whatever purpose the occupant desired.

Joe wondered how much desire there was in the house at the moment.

Jean's hand tightened on his; dialogue would be futile in the roar. The big dial at the front of the room was climbing. As it swung past eight hundred, the sound ceased.

Once out of the atmosphere, it would be worthless until they entered the atmosphere of Eldora, but Joe watched it now, climbing toward twenty-five thousand, toward escape velocity.

Curt and Berjouhi sat behind them, and Curt leaned forward to say, "I hope you two play bridge."

This was on August 14th.

By the eighteenth, Joe had had more bridge than a reasonable man can absorb. On the evening of the eighteenth, using earth time, they turned out the lights at ten-thirty.

That was the night Mary Lang died. Joe came up out of the depths of a dream to see the floating ball of fire in the cabin. A shriek had wakened him. He fumbled for the light switch, as Jean muttered next to him.

Then there was a flash, as the lights went on.

There was no one in the seat next to Mary Lang. The washroom door opened and Nels Andriesen stood there, staring at the seat he had deserted momentarily, next to Mary. The upholstery was burned, scorched. And there was an odor of burnt hair in the cabin.

Jed Landry, who had the seat opposite, rose now and bent over Mary Lang.

Joe came forward. "You're a doctor, aren't you, Jed?"

Jed shook his head. "Never completed my interneship. But it doesn't need a doctor to see she's dead."

There was a murmur behind Joe, and a woman fainted in the forward part of the cabin.

Berjouhi said, "I was the one who screamed. I saw that ball of fire, and—"

Murmuring all around them, hysteria mounting. One woman

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said, "Ball lightning. I've seen it before, on the farm. It's—"

Joe raised a hand for silence. "We'll need to be calm. Jed, will you take a look at that woman who fainted? And Curt, how about her—? If it was electricity, would it still be dangerous to touch her?"

Curt shook his head. "I don't think so. How about artificial respiration, Jed?"

Landry shook his head. "Not for that one. You haven't seen her, Curt."

Very few of them could see the scorched, ugly sight. Joe stayed close to the seat as a shield, and gestured for Curt to come over.

Curt stared at her without apparent emotion. "If we'd entered an atmosphere, it could be frictional electricity through the ship's skin." He looked up at the huge dial at the front of the cabin, which registered zero. He looked at Joe. "Or some kind of static electricity from the various mechanisms aboard, or a million other things I'm not prepared to know about. I was never an electrician. As that woman said, it looked like ball lightning."

Joe took a blanket from Andriesen's chair and covered the body.

Andriesen stood next to them, now. "Lord, I could have been sitting there. If I hadn't had to go to the washroom, I—" He shook his head.

Landry was back now. "The woman's all right. She's come out of it. How about this one? What do we do with Lang's body?"

Curt Mueller said, "The same thing we do with all our waste. I hope nobody here is sentimental about dead bodies."

Landry said, "The rest of our waste is still following us. There's nothing to prevent it. It would be rather ghastly to see this body following us through space, too."

"Not as ashes," Curt said. "We have the incinerator."

Joe shivered. Landry frowned. Curt said, "I hope that doesn't sound heartless. But cremation isn't any worse here than on earth. Should we take a vote on it?"

"She wouldn't fit," Joe said. "The incinerator isn't big enough."

Landry shrugged. "I could do the surgery. There's no state board to interfere, here."

"Where?" Joe asked.

"In the washroom." He put a hand on Joe's shoulder. "You seem to have taken command, a very satisfactory situation to me. You suggest the vote."

The vote favored cremation, nine to four. The four who voted against it were women, and not one of them seemed too sorry to have the vote go against them.

Less than an hour later, the ashes of Mary Lang went out to join the trail of debris following them through the universe.

The lights in the cabin were still on; nobody wanted to go back to sleep. In the washroom, Joe and Jed studied Mary Lang's file.

She'd been a personnel director

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for a large industrial firm, despite her less than thirty years. She'd had a brother killed in an industrial accident and quit her job, soon after, going to Hawaii to live. She had a phobia regarding anything mechanical, but was otherwise sound, her psychiatric report stated.

"Like all of us," Jed Landry said.

Joe stared at him. "You, too?"

"Like all of us," Jed repeated, "or we wouldn't be here. You should circulate more, Joe, like I did when I got to Gifford. And now this." He took a deep breath.

"Now what—?" Joe's voice was annoyed.

"Now this — *mechanical* accident."

"For heaven's sakes," Joe said. "People are bitten by snakes, and fall off cliffs and drown and get hit by falling trees and—"

"But not here."

"No, not here. Here, they get hit by lightning."

Jed's smile was dim. "All right, Joe. Let's not get worked up."

"You're right," Joe agreed. He looked around. "I suppose we'd better be sure this place is washed up well before we let the others in, again."

Curt helped with that. And, surprisingly, Jean. Fortitude isn't measured with muscles, as she'd said.

Out in the cabin, the passengers talked in subdued voices. In a corner, Nels Andriesen was trying to improvise a bed with blankets and pillows.

Everybody had paired up, and Joe wondered about that. Had the RTM Scanner also chosen them for romantic preferences? It must have. But Nels was now alone, and afraid to go back to his scorched seat.

Curt and Berjouhi had swung their seats around to face Joe's and Jean's. They all stopped talking as Joe sat down. They looked at him.

"If it's an electrical leak, somewhere," Joe said, "couldn't we put up something like lightning rods, or a net of wires that would act the same way?"

Curt shrugged. "Electricity was never my long suit, Joe. It would not hurt to try. And it might help to quiet some of the more hysterical passengers. It will look like *something* is being done."

Berjouhi said, "And where would we get the wire, or the rods?"

"We could pull the wiring out of the walls," Joe said. "We don't need all these lights. We could scrape the insulation off it, and—"

"Take another look at the walls, Joe," Curt said. "They aren't bolted on; they're moulded in one piece."

Which they were, seamless duryllium, seven hundred times as hard as chrome steel, after six months of seasoning. And this ship was more than six months old.

"There must be wire in the cargo compartment," Joe guessed.

Curt nodded. "And we can get to it, once we land. They didn't figure we'd be using any wire on

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the trip. Remember, as the government man said, it's all foolproof."

"Proof against fools," Berjouhi said. "I never stopped to realize, when I applied for this trip, that we wouldn't be traveling on a flying carpet. This, too, is a machine, isn't it?"

Curt said, "Let's be sensible now. That way lies madness."

Berjouhi opened her mouth to say something, and Joe thought, *here we go, again. Now we get the Barton story.*

But Curt said quickly and sharply, "I'm serious, Berj. That's not good talk for now, even if it made sense."

"The true mechanic talking," Berjouhi said.

Curt flushed, and there was a silence. Curt rose and went over to the miquart window to stare out at the stars.

Jean said, "That wasn't enough to hurt him that much. Is he ashamed of being a mechanic?"

"He wanted to keep it secret," Berjouhi answered. "He's had a sad history as a mechanic, a lot of close calls. He wants to forget all about it."

"Well, then," Jean said calmly, "you were a Grade A bitch, and you ought to go over and tell him so."

Berjouhi nodded, and rose. "You're right on both counts." She went over to stand next to Curt, to link her arm in his.

Jean said, "Couldn't we have the communication box on? There might be some news from earth."

There was news from earth. A passenger air liner had crashed at Miami. Automobile fatalities for the first six months of the year were doubled over the same period last year. A rail wreck in Illinois had cost three hundred lives. Joe snapped it off, again.

Silence. He looked at Jean, and she was looking straight ahead, at nothing.

Joe said, "It was your idea. That's behind us."

Her voice was ragged, and she continued to look straight ahead. "All of them, all of those accidents were in transportation."

"On earth. None of them can happen in Eldora. There'll be plenty following us."

"How? Are they going to sprout wings?"

He said nothing. The tremble started in one knee, and he felt cold, and the throbbing in his skull began again dimly. He reached for the pills, and decided against them. He put an arm around Jean's shoulders. "We're not licked yet, honey."

She burrowed close to him, tears running down her cheeks. "I'm sorry, Joe. I guess it—was—that washroom." She cried silently, shivering in his embrace.

Joe thought about Curt, who'd been called a mechanic by Berjouhi. That could mean more; if that was Curt's line he was more than a mechanic. An engineer? A mechanical theoritician?

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And why was he here? Well, why hadn't Jed Landry finished his interneship? There were a multitude of 'whys'; the room was haunted with them.

Curt and Berjouhi came back, smiling and sheepish. They looked wonderingly at Jean's tear stained face and inquiringly at Joe.

Joe said, "Reaction. The washroom and then we turned on the communication box, and the news from earth was bad."

Curt said, "It will get worse, the news from earth. Some day, some of the cheap help they're getting at Los Alamos will make a more serious mistake than they've already made, and there'll be no more news from earth."

"Mistakes? I didn't read about any mistakes in the papers, Curt."

"The smallest mistake there," Curt said, "is too big for the papers. Let's not talk about earth."

He didn't voice it, but implicit in his words was the declaration, *and let's not talk about me.*

The lights stayed on, but fatigue took over. They dozed.

The next day, Joe talked to the woman who had screamed, who had first seen the floating ball. He learned very little from her that he hadn't seen with his own eyes.

"It moved so slowly," she said. "Not at all like—electricity or lightning. As though it were—seeking somebody."

"It was seeking a medium with a lower potential," Joe said calmly. "Like lightning. If it was ball lightning, there was nothing personal in it, Miss Hought."

"Mary's just as dead," she said.

Nels Andriesen slept on the pillows in a corner of the cabin. At the forward window, Jed Landry was looking out at the red disc of Mars. Joe went over to stand next to him.

"Into the asteroid belt, now," Jed said. "Anything can happen."

Joe said nothing.

Jed studied him. "Dispirited?"

"I've a little headache."

"I've some pills that will fix you up."

Joe took the box from his pocket and held it in the palm of his hand for Jed to see.

Jed took it and studied the prescription on the cover. "Ouch. You're careful with these, aren't you?"

"I was told never to take more than two a day."

"One a day would be better, and not two days in a row. Eight of these would stop your heart like a bullet."

Joe looked out and saw Deimos. And saw the the shattered house and the clothes on the line, and closed his eyes.

Jed said, "I could doctor the food, a little. There's an undercurrent of hysteria here."

"A good idea," Joe said, and opened his eyes. *Man can't escape,* he thought, *not from himself.*

The mechanisms of the ship worked on, creating oxygen, filtering the water to be used over and

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over again, sending the solid wastes out into space, scattering their offal into the growing tail that followed them through the universe. A comet with a garbage tail.

The woman who'd seen ball lightning on the farm came over to tell Joe, "If Mr. Andriesen wants, he can have my seat. I'll take his."

"I'll tell him," Joe said. "You won't be—frightened?"

She shook her head, smiling. "Lightning never strikes twice in the same place."

From his seat, Curt looked up, opened his mouth—and closed it as Berjouhi prodded him with an elbow.

The woman and Nels traded seats an hour later.

At dinner, Joe asked Curt, "Have you given any thought to some kind of protection, some net of electricity conducting material, or rods?"

"I've thought of it," Curt said, "but I haven't come up with anything. There's nothing to work with, Joe."

"There must be wire in these communication boxes."

Curt glanced at the box and back at Joe. "Yes, there must be. Very fine wire, though, nothing that would carry off the terrible amperage of that—lightning."

"Maybe not. But wouldn't it act as a preventive, siphoning off any accumulations of electricity before they became dangerous?"

"And grounding them where?"

"Into the body of the ship. That must be the ground. The metallic tops of these seats must have been the attraction. It acted as an—oh, electric chair for Mary Lang."

Curt said, "How about the floor of the ship? It's magnetic enough to keep us from drifting. Perhaps it's the source of our trouble, too."

"And if it is?"

"Nothing. It was just a suggestion. You know as much about electricity as I do, which is very little, Joe. But if you want me to help you rig this net or whatever you have in mind, I'll be glad to help."

They dismantled one of the boxes right after lunch and there was wire in it. Wire as thin as fine hair, thinner. On a coil.

Curt looked at it and shook his head.

Joe said, "All right, it's thin. But it carries electricity; it could carry away any accumulations before they get big enough to be dangerous." He frowned. "Wouldn't it?"

Curt smiled. "You know exactly as much about it as I do. Nothing. Let's get to work."

They scraped the insulation off, with help from the girls. And then they strung it back and forth across the roof of the cabin, grounding it to the screws that held each communication box to the wall of the ship, a total of fourteen ground connections.

And left Joe and Jean no communication box. "Which I can do without," Jean said, and Joe agreed.

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It was nine in the evening, earth time, when they finished.

Jean said, "I wonder if anybody will kick if we turn the lights out, tonight? I'd like some rest."

"We could leave a light on near the washroom," Joe suggested. "That should make everybody happy."

It was a restless night for Joe. The reaction to last night's tragedy had stirred them all into restlessness; each time Joe opened his eyes, there were at least three or four others awake.

At breakfast, it seemed to him, there was a lessening of the general tension; above the murmur of dialogue there was an occasional laugh.

An hour after breakfast, there was a scream and Joe glanced toward the last two seats, where a bridge game was going on. He saw no ball of fire, this time, though some one of the four must have seen it. All Joe saw was the flash.

For a moment there was absolute silence, and then a woman screamed. The smell turned Joe's stomach, and Jean's fingers were digging into his forearm.

"Oh, God, oh, God, oh, God—" Jean's voice was a dull monotone. She closed her eyes.

Jed Landry looked at Joe and took a breath. And then the babble of voices around them grew and the threat of hysteria filled the cabin. Joe sat stunned, unable to move.

Jed Landry rose and took a blanket from the storage box under his seat. Joe sensed what he meant to do; Joe rose and followed him to the far end of the cabin.

There, he helped to hang the blanket from the wires overhead, screening the spectacle from the eyes of the others.

Jed looked at Joe's trembling hands and up into his white, sick face. "You up to it, Joe?"

"Somebody has to do it."

"But not necessarily you. We could ask for volunteers. I've been trained to look at things like this, but you—?"

Then Jean was there. "I can help."

"No," Joe said. "No women."

"I can help," she repeated.

This time, it was Jed who answered. "No. I appreciate your courage, but I won't have it. There are plenty of men here to help."

One of the girls was Amy Templeton; one of the men Mike Lynch. The other pair were the only married couple on board, a Mr. and Mrs. George Desni of Gary, Indiana.

In the washroom, Jed Landry said, "Maybe I'd better really dope that food, put the whole gang in a semi-coma. Damn it, that's what I'll do. Before they start killing each other."

"Or themselves," Joe said. "You don't think this is anything but an —accident, do you, Jed?"

Jed didn't look up, intent on his work. "How do you mean?"

"Maybe the government was

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glad to get rid of us, and this was one way to do it."

"A very expensive way. No, Joe, the government didn't have this in mind, at all, I'm sure."

"What are we, a bunch of accident prones, then?"

"It looks that way, doesn't it?" Jed still hadn't looked up. "Or maybe we're just enemies of the machine, and this machine knows it."

"Oh, Lord— What kind of talk is that from a scientifically trained man?"

Jed looked up now. "Strange talk, isn't it? You might ask the man who calls himself Curt Mueller." He went back to his cutting.

"Calls himself—? Isn't it his right name?"

"Ask him. I've said too much already."

"It would look like prying," Joe said. "It's none of my business, really."

Jed worked on without answering, and Joe began to wrap the parcels for the calcifier.

When they were mopping up, Jed said, "Five gone. I wonder who's next?"

"That's what they're all wondering, probably," Joe said. "You'd better get your opiates ready, Doctor."

Not all of the passengers ate lunch. Those who did could be determined soon after. They dozed, they yawned, they slept, depending on their resistance and their temperaments.

Jed Landry gave them a short talk as the ashes of the last four victims joined the growing tail. He talked of hysteria and fortitude, of faith and doubt. The words were all there, but he didn't sound as though he believed any of them personally.

The ones who hadn't eaten lunch became aware of the relaxed mental attitude of those who had. They all ate dinner. Joe and Curt and Jed were the only men who didn't want the opiate in their food. Jean was the only woman.

Past Jupiter, the huge ship bored through space, out of the asteroid belt, moving steadily toward Galaxy E.

Nels Andriesen died that night, and no one had seen the ball of fire. The shock of his death didn't seem to disturb the doctored passengers; they were like slave robots.

But Curt decided to take the opiate after that.

Jean said to Joe, "I won't take it until you do."

"Because of that crack I made about colonists, because I doubted the courage of the group?"

"Maybe. But isn't an opiate the same as a—surrender?"

"I don't see why. Staying completely aware of things isn't going to do any good unless we can fight. And we can't fight the inevitable."

"Coming around, are you, Joe?"

"Around to what?"

"To—Mr. Think?"

"If you mean there's a design to this, no. It's faulty thinking by

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the men who designed the ship. It's their error."

"How do you know?"

"How else can a man believe and stay sane?"

"The boys in Cybernetics were sane, and 'mechanical malignancy' was their word."

Behind them, Curt Mueller said, "The boys in Cybernetics, Jean, weren't all sane. Not after they'd been there a while."

Joe turned around. "How do you know, Curt?"

Curt stared at him with dull and hopeless eyes. "A little bird told me."

Berjouhi said, "Curt, you didn't mean that. And if you can help us, now, you *must*."

"If I could, I would," Curt said, and closed his eyes.

Berjouhi flushed and she looked at Joe beseechingly. Jean said, "There's probably nothing that can be done, Berjouhi. Or I know Curt would help."

Nothing from Curt; he kept his eyes closed. Joe turned around, annoyance growing in him.

Jean said, "Maybe we'd better get some of Jed's dope."

"I've got something better than that, if I want to use it."

Eight of these would stop your heart like a bullet. . . .

Jean's hand wormed its way into his, and she said wearily, "I wonder if any of us will make it?"

Behind them, Curt said, "Joe or I will. Those landing blasters can't go on automatically. So, unless the ship intends to destroy itself, Joe or I will make it."

Joe didn't turn around, this time. Later, he took Jed and Jean over to the box and opened it with his key. He explained the three stages and the coordination between the colors on the gauge and the three buttons.

When Joe and Jean returned to their seats, Curt's eyes were open and he smiled at Joe. "You've cut down our odds. Now, it's one in four."

"I'm not superstitious," Joe said.

Curt held Joe's gaze. "Neither am I."

For seconds, Joe stared at him and then Curt closed his eyes again.

Berjouhi died that night, and it was a replica of the first death. The scream, the ball, the flash, the stench—and Curt Mueller standing in the door of the washroom, where Nels Andriesen had stood in that first nightmare.

This time, it had been Jean who'd screamed. The dull eyes of the other passengers were focused on the seat behind them, but nobody made a move to help.

Next to Joe, Jean started to moan, her face rigid in shock, saliva dribbling from one corner of her mouth.

Then Jed stood next to them, and Jed had a hypodermic needle in his hand.

Jean turned his way, saw the needle, and held out her arm. Behind them, Curt was cursing softly, the same words over and over again.

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Jed told Joe, "I'll take care of this one, alone. You stay here."

Jed didn't take care of it alone. Curt went into the washroom with him.

Jean dozed and Joe sat there, staring at nothing, and then the woman ahead of them turned to face him. "How much longer?"

"Five days."

"None of us will make it, will we?"

"I don't know. Nobody knows."

She took a deep breath, and turned around again. Joe saw her head tilt forward a few seconds later, and then her partner was lowering the back of her seat, and Joe saw she had fallen asleep.

Jed must really have them doped, he thought. Why shouldn't I join them? It's not my burden. I've done my share. There's no way to fight.

Around him, they all dozed. While, in the washroom, Curt and Jed prepared the body of Berjouhi for disposal.

When Curt came out, his face was haggard, his eyes blank. Jed stayed in the washroom, and Joe went in there, after a while.

Jed told him, "Curt was really hit by this death." He rubbed the back of his neck wearily. "I think I'll stay in here. Maybe it isn't as dangerous. I've suddenly developed a great desire to live."

"Maybe we all ought to crowd in here," Joe suggested.

Jed shrugged. "And if we're wrong about it—who's left? We'd be jammed so tight, one bolt would do it. I don't want to be responsible for that kind of decision."

"Maybe you're right." Joe went over to lean against one of the dryers. "Do you want to tell me about Curt, before it might be too late?"

"I don't follow you, Joe."

Joe told him about finding Curt in his room, that day. "And now he's so damned secretive about his past. Why?"

Jed was silent a moment. Then, "I believe that he went into your room by mistake, as he claimed. And about his past, it's *his*, and if he doesn't want to talk about it, I surely don't."

"All right, all right. Will you give me something? I'd like to get some sleep, too."

It was four hours later that he was roused from a troubled sleep, wakened to find Curt shaking his shoulder.

"In the washroom," Curt said. "Jed's dead in there."

Joe nodded. "Sure. We were picked by a machine. An RTM Scanner. What did you expect?"

"Joe, in the name of God—"

"All right. So he's dead. I can't cut him up. Can you?"

Curt nodded. "I've a medical degree, among the others. I'll handle it alone, then."

"Handle it," Joe said, and went back to sleep.

In the morning, Curt handed out the food to the five who were left besides himself. He told Joe, "I

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doctored it. Maybe I'd better tell you about me, Joe. In the washroom, after we eat."

"Not unless you want to," Joe said.

"I wouldn't have mentioned it if I didn't want to."

In the washroom, half an hour later, Curt told him, "My real name is Lars Knutsen. Recognize it?"

Joe nodded. "I guess I should. Dr. Lars Knutsen. Worked on that cybernetic marvel that was supposed to make man obsolete. I remember reading about how you failed, and what a razzing you got in the papers. The 'artificial man' you were going to make, weren't you? The mechanical man?"

"We did, Joe. You didn't read that in the papers. We made it and saw it walk and heard it talk. And we destroyed it."

"Why—?"

"Because it killed one of our men, one of our young assistants. For no reason at all, except that the assistant happened to jostle it."

"A mechanism," Joe said, "gone wrong because there was some error in its design. But designed by man, *faultily* designed by man."

"Maybe. It strangled the assistant. Put both hands on his neck and efficiently strangled him."

"It's not something I understand," Joe said, "enough to argue about."

"Right. I've degrees in engineering, medicine and chemistry and it's not something I can understand, either, Joe. But it's why I'm here. I know you've been suspicious of me, and I wanted you to know my background. If we get through this, there should be no suspicions on Eldora, not between men."

"Okay, Doctor," Joe said, and held out a hand.

"I'm still Curt to everybody. From now on, I'm Curt Mueller."

"All right, Curt. We live in hope. Maybe, once out of this galaxy— Well, maybe— Who knows?"

A few hundred million miles beyond Pluto, Elsbeth Mariner and Arthur Paganto died, holding hands. They'd been holding hands for that doubtfully romantic purpose; they wanted to die together.

Joe helped Curt with them, and now there were just the four of them, Curt and Joe and Jean and Ruth Schmidt.

Eldora was in sight when Ruth died.

Jean said, "No more opiates for me. I want to see that planet get bigger. I want to see it turn green. Joe, others will follow now, won't they? We're just the first."

"I hope," Joe said. "Unless we want to breed our own children."

"Well, there's Curt—but he'd be kind of old by that time. Oh, Joe, we're going to make it, aren't we? And this trip will just be a nightmare, fading in our memories?"

"If you believe," Joe said, "now would be the time to pray."

Curt said, "After the first two stages go, the green and the blue, the ship will turn, Joe. The landing

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blasters are the same propellant we used to escape earth. If we get too deep into the red zone, we'd better lock ourselves to something stationary."

Joe nodded. "You'd better handle it. I've more faith in you than I have in myself."

Curt's smile was wry. "That's some change."

At the forward window, Jean said, "It seems to be getting bigger. Or is that just an illusion?"

Joe went over to stand next to her at the window. "I don't notice any change, but it will get bigger."

"And better," Curt said. He headed for the washroom. "Better unlock the board, Joe."

Curt hadn't closed the door to the washroom when the flash came.

Joe saw the smoke billowing out, smelled the stench of burned flesh and heard Jean moan beside him. He held her tight.

"Oh, Joe—not Curt, too."

She was trembling in his arm. There was a tremor in his knees, but he walked with her to the board, and unlocked it.

They stood there, their eyes locked to the gravi-pulse gauge. The needle was at rest in the neutral section.

Joe said, "Maybe there's life on the planet that we don't know about."

"And if there isn't, others will follow, anyway. Joe, I love you."

"And I love you. The Scanner did a good job there, anyway."

"Let's not talk about that. We're going to make it, aren't we? We have to make it."

"We're still here, alive. I don't know anything beyond that." He indicated the straps. "We'd better buckle ourselves in."

Ten minutes passed, twenty. An hour passed, and he was wet with perspiration and his knees ached like rotten molars. Two hours, three. . . .

Jean said, "Could the gauge be wrong?"

The needle wavered, and Joe stiffened. The needle moved slowly through the neutral section, edging almost imperceptibly toward the green section.

Sweat ran down over Joe's eyes, and he wiped it away with a forearm. Jean was whispering, "We're going to make it," over and over and over.

The green, and he pressed the green button, felt the drag, heard the distant rumble of the forward guide blasters. He saw Eldora through the rear window and knew the ship was tilting, end for end.

And then, dimly, he thought he felt the pull of gravity as the gauge worked up toward the blue zone. Through the window, he saw the ashes move past the ship, and turned to see Jean watching them, too.

The gauge climbed to blue, and he pressed the blue button, and now there was a definite sense of gravity tugging at him. Curt's body came sliding down from the washroom, and Jean screamed.

"We're going to make it," Joe

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said. "We're in the gravitational field of Eldora now, I'm sure. Easy, honey."

The rumble of the second stage blasters grew stronger, and the gauge climbed toward the red, and Joe looked up at the huge gauge in the front of the cabin. It was beginning to flicker.

A few minutes later, it swung to the end of its semi-circle.

"What does it mean?" Jean asked.

"It means we're traveling faster than twenty-five thousand miles an hour," Joe said. "It's not meant for landing; it shows our escape velocity."

His eyes were on the gravi-pulse gauge, and now it came into the red. He pressed the red button.

And nothing happened, nothing at all.

Jean said, "Something's wrong?"

Joe remembered Curt telling him that the *first two stages* were foolproof. This one, obviously, wasn't. He pressed the red button again.

"Joe, what is it? For heaven's sakes, Joe, what—"

"We're going to die a different way," Joe said, and looked at her. "We're going to smash up with the ship. I can't slow it, and we're aimed at Eldora at a speed beyond twenty-five thousand miles an hour, I'm sure. The blasters, the last stage, is out of commission." Desperately, he jabbed at the button, bruising his thumb.

"How long, Joe? How long before we—"

"I don't know."

"I wish I had a knife," she said. "Anything—I wish I could cheat the machine out of that much."

Eight of these will stop your heart like a bullet. . . .

Joe brought them out, and there were seventeen in the box. He said, "One way's as painless as the other."

"But this is our volition. That much decision we should have left, shouldn't we?"

"It's surrender," Joe said.

"I don't put that interpretation on it. I want them, Joe. How many will it take?"

"Eight. I'll give you nine. I'll take the eight. If it's the way you want it, it's the way I want it."

Below them, the green dish that was Eldora rushing toward them, as the pills went down, one after another, melting on the tongue. Below them, Eldora growing bigger as their hearts gave that last hammering jolt, as they died, holding hands.

Below them, the huge landing blasters coming into flaming life as the solenoid worked the massive switch. The fall was slowed, and their dead bodies strained at the straps as the blasters bit into their acceleration, slowing and finally killing it.

Cushioning the descent, preserving the machine.

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satellites of the future

by . . . Werner Buedeler

What is the next step in the development of the idea of artificial earth satellites? What could this mean for us?

IF ANYONE in the year 2000, or even perhaps 1975 or 1980, were to look back to the International Geophysical Year of 1957-8, he would probably regard the Vanguard satellites as mechanical oddities—just as we regard the first aeroplanes and motor-cars—instead of the great scientific achievement of our age.

By that time, there will be much more impressive artificial satellites in various orbits far from the Earth —not a mere 300 miles away, but 800, 1,000, 1,200 miles away; not twenty inches in diameter, but fifty or eighty yards. The scientific instruments in these great satellites will be controlled not by automatic devices, but by flesh and blood.

The crews of the satellites will perform their various duties just as the crews of Arctic and Antarctic weather stations do today. Supply rockets will have taken the place of supply ships, and will maintain physical contact with the Earth. After completing their tour of duty, the crews will be relieved, as is the present custom with remote and inhospitable outposts.

The satellites of the I.G.Y. constitute man's first attempt at hurling

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Werner Buedeler, founder in 1953 of the "Association of German Science Writers," is widely known in Europe as a writer on astronomy, nuclear physics and related fields. The above article appeared in his OPERATION VANGUARD, *published a few months ago in London by Burke Publishing Co.*

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measuring devices far into space. Almost as though he forgets to let go, he himself will follow these instruments in a decade or so.

Many things at present unknown to us will be common knowledge by the end of the Geophysical Year. Some of these unknown factors are those which will have a direct influence on the success of the satellite project. An oft-cited example is the density of the air at orbital altitude. The difficulties and possible setbacks which will arise within the framework of the scheme will have their lessons for us. It will be a case of learning by experience, for we are venturing into new realms. The first satellite project will establish precedents for other, more ambitious undertakings of this sort.

While many scientists are now busy assembling and trying out the carrier rockets for the Vanguard satellites, while they plan new and better instruments and work out their complex calculations relating to the orbits of the satellites, some of their colleagues are, in imagination, already at a time when "Operation Vanguard" has been fully accomplished. The time will then be ripe for deeper penetrations into space.

Technical journals are full of serious proposals for artificial earth satellites, all scientifically worked out. They range from modest projects which do not differ much from that of Vanguard, to almost fantastic ideas whose material and financial expenditure would put all previous technical undertakings to shame.

Let us look at some of these projects, and see what effects their realization might bring about. This is not sheer digression into fantasy, but simple exploration along the plane of scientific thought and foresight. Let us begin by assuming that the satellites of the Geophysical Year are established, so that everything else follows in a logical sequence.

In Professor Singer's satellite project, MOUSE, we have a satellite which is likely to be developed, in a somewhat altered form. Even though the instrumental complement of the MOUSE, as well as the location of its orbit and several details, do not coincide exactly with the technical data of the Vanguard project, they are essentially one and the same thing.

The next step in the development of the idea of artificial earth satellites could well be Wernher von Braun's concept, which appeared in the Press under the title, "Baby Space Station." This is an earth satellite which would circle the Earth at an orbital distance of about 200 miles. It would contain telemetering devices which would relay certain information to the ground. This information would be physiological rather than physical, and thus would constitute the main difference between the Baby Space Station and the Vanguard project.

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The Baby Space Station would carry three rhesus monkeys as passengers. Relatives of animals which have already experienced conditions in space for a few minutes during rocket ascents, the monkeys would now spend days, weeks, even months in space, outside the Earth's atmosphere. It is, of course, understood that the involuntary pioneers will be supplied with food and drink, and will have sufficient air to breathe. Only after about 60 days, when the satellite is approaching its doom and threatens to burn out, will the animals come to harm. In order to spare them the horrible fate of being burned alive, they will be gassed before the temperature rises appreciably inside the satellite.

All the details of this Baby Space Station have been worked out. Its purpose is to discover how living organisms will react to conditions in space—weightlessness, cosmic rays, ultra-violet radiation, etc. It will pave the way for man to launch himself into space. All physiological symptoms, such as respiration, blood pressure, power of reaction, heart activity and so on, which the creatures showed, would be recorded by instruments, converted into electrical impulses and relayed to Earth.

When this plan was first made public, many people protested. Why, they asked, should innocent animals be sentenced to undergo this journey into uncertainty and subsequent death?

On ethical grounds, this question is quite justified. On the other hand, it must be remembered that every day hundreds of research animals die in order to keep people alive. Only by experiments on animals can certain illnesses be diagnosed and cures for them found. The experiments are not undertaken without regret, but that does not make the facts any more pleasant: there is no other way out. And the same applies to the satellite project.

A Baby Space Station would extend our knowledge of space in the fields of physiology and medicine; together with the further development of rocketry and with investigations by means of such vehicles as balloons, it will form the preliminary basis for the projects to follow. First, however, there will be more satellites like those of the Geophysical Year, traveling in different orbits, carrying different instruments, increasing our store of knowledge. Then we can go ahead with a manned space station.

A number of such space stations have been designed in recent years. Most of these designs are not confined merely to a description of the orbit and structural particulars of the station, but also go into the details connected with the building of them. A space station project by Wernher von Braun, aiming at a diameter of 230 feet and capable of holding 15 persons, envisages the components being brought by three-step carrier rockets to an orbital height of 1,000 miles, where they

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will be assembled. The last step of each carrier rocket is to be fitted with stub wings, so that it may return to the Earth's surface in a long glide. Needless to say, the whole project would be extremely expensive.

The construction of such a station would be by no means an easy matter, and even von Braun admits that many technical, mathematical and medical problems have yet to be solved before such a plan can be put into action. But they are problems of the sort which arise in every ambitious technical project: problems which at first seem insoluble, until the progress of work makes their solution imperative—when the answer suddenly presents itself, resulting from experience gained on the project itself.

It would take much too long to describe the technical intricacies of such an undertaking: Yet the fact that serious-minded engineers of proved ability are developing plans for such a project should alone be enough to convince us of its feasibility.

Besides Wernher von Braun's well-known project for a manned satellite station, there are also others designed by various technicians. In principle they agree with von Braun's project, although, of course, figures and proportions vary, and some of the specific problems are to be tackled in other ways.

You may be wondering why on earth (or should it be "in space"?) is it considered necessary to build space stations at all, and this question is perfectly reasonable.

To begin with, scientific research which cannot be carried out on the ground can be developed on a space station. It would be possible to study the behavior of living matter in weightless condition; this would give doctors new information. It would be possible to conduct biophysical experiments, as, for example, the effect of zero gravity upon the ability to grow. Scientists could examine the behavior of materials under the influence of cosmic rays, and at extreme temperatures—and so forth.

Experiments of this nature are undeniably important, and a complete list of them would fill many pages, but they are not the main reason for a space station.

The space station is the place where the interplanetary traveler of the future will change rockets!

Therein lies its significance. If we examine the situation closely, we find that a flight from the space station to the Moon, 239,000 miles away, or to Mars, 35,000,000 miles away, is more easily accomplished than a flight from the Earth to the space station, although the latter distance is a matter of only 1,000 miles or so.

This is sometimes called "the astronautical paradox." The reason for it is that the Earth is a fairly massive planet, and more energy is necessary to overcome its gravitational attraction than for the rest of the journey to the Moon or Mars.

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Space-craft designed to make such journeys have already been thought out. For the sake of continuity, let us again quote Wernher von Braun. He has designed a Lunar Project, as well as being the creator of a Mars Expedition. In the latter, a fleet of ten spaceships, carrying 70 men, would set out from the space station, en route for Mars. The journey to that planet should take them 260 days. Using landing rockets which they have brought with them, an expedition of 50 men would then descend to the surface of Mars. The actual space-craft will in the meantime circle Mars in a satellite orbit. Having spent 446 days on Mars (such a duration is necessary to ensure that Mars and the Earth are suitably placed for the return journey), the landing rockets carry the surface expedition back to the space-craft, and then leave their orbit round Mars, using rocket power, and head for home.

With the help of his associates, von Braun has already thought out the project in minute detail. Great and small problems alike have been discussed, dealing with such matters as provisions, air and navigation.

The cost of such an operation is of course phenomenal, but we must not forget that it includes the possibility that men from the Earth may eventually have the opportunity to colonize another planet—though this is perhaps carrying speculation a little too far ahead. It is difficult to say how many decades away these great developments are—but they ARE only decades, not centuries.

The conquest of space by mankind is before us. Never in his whole history has man let an opportunity pass him by without attempting to grasp it with both hands. This applies to mechanically propelled vehicles on the ground as well as to deep-sea diving with complex apparatus; it applies equally to the climbing of high mountains, and to flying through the air. It applies to the advance in the Arctic seas and the Antarctic continent; and it will continue to apply so far as space-flight is concerned. The time is ripe for man's greatest adventure yet.

We might have traveled still further on the wings of time, and so come across other, still more incredible things. Meanwhile, this chapter has given us a glimpse of what may lie ahead.

Man's mind and imagination are not great enough to envisage every possibility; reality has always proved to be even more whimsical and fantastic. This will also be the case in the conquest of space by man.

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winged victory

by...Thomas Burnett Swann

THE ARCHEOLOGICAL RECORD, July, 1963:

From its pedestal in the Louvre, the Winged Victory of Samothrace has greeted visitors for almost a century and inspired them to draw, paint, photograph, and scrutinize. Till seven months ago, however, the goddess lacked arms and a head, and few could see her without secretly wishing for the restoration of such vital appendages.

Last year an archeological field expedition to Samothrace uncovered a marble head not far from the original location of the Winged Victory. At first no one associated head and statue, since the head was decidedly non-human. True, it had eyes, nose, mouth, and somewhat dishevelled hair. But the "ears" resembled the antennae of a wasp. Such an object was unique in the annals of archeology. Three months later, a second discovery not only solved the enigma of the head and linked it to the Winged Victory, but hinted that the earth had been visited by extra-terrestrials in the year 306 B.C. The discovery was a papyrus manuscript written by a sculptor of Samothrace. The Archeologi-

Demetrius Poliocretes, ruler of Samothrace, could be quite difficult. Sculptors who irritated him had been executed.

Have you ever wondered who stood model for "The Winged Victory of Samothrace," and who was responsible for the graceful sweep of the lines, both visible and invisible, of which you are so conscious? Thomas Burnett Swann, Tennessee poet and writer who now lives in Florida, answers the question.

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cal Record *is proud to publish the first English translation of that manuscript. For the convenience of our readers, the Greek gods have been designated by their more familiar Roman names.*

MANUSCRIPT OF SOSICLES, SCULPTOR OF SAMOTHRACE

Patara reclined in a nest of purple cushions while I chiseled a nose on my latest statue, Venus Couchant. Suddenly a young man burst into the room.

"Mercury!" Patara shrieked, and concealed her opulence behind a cushion. She was not being superstitious. Strange lights had lit the sky recently, and rumor had it that they were the flying chariots of the gods.

The young man, however, introduced himself as an emissary from Demetrius Poliocretes, King of Macedonia and Samothrace. Demetrius was a redoubtable and willful monarch and his recent naval victory over Ptolemy of Egypt had added to his self-esteem. Last year I had sculpted some Venuses for him and been well rewarded, but sculptors who disappointed him were exiled or executed.

"The king wants a statue to commemorate his victory," said the messenger in a rude voice. He had the look of brash confidence which often characterizes the very young or the very stupid.

"Oh?" I said. "How about a statue of Venus, who fills the hearts of the king's subjects with love?" Most of my life I had carved Venuses. The women I preferred as models were invariably of a Venus-like voluptuousness. I was an indoor type myself. Though under thirty, I preferred the couch to the battlefield and candlelight to sunshine.

"He wants a statue of Victory. With wings, torch, and robe."

I was silent.

"Well?"

"I'll see what I can do."

"And *I* will return at the end of the week to see what you've done."

He left without a good-bye. Patara tossed aside the purple cushion and resumed her pose.

"I'm afraid," I said to her, "that Venus will have to sit up for awhile."

Sighing, she got to her feet. Like most hetaerae, she was pink and white with artfully applied cosmetics and redolent of sweet lotions. Her sable hair swirled upward into elaborate curlicues which held, as the black earth holds greenery, a cluster of tiny jade apples. Patara was an intoxicating woman, but could I make her into Victory? I draped a stark white robe around her shoulders. Then I tilted her head back so that she would seem to be gazing down triumphantly on a defeated host, and thrust a torch into her hand. Perhaps I could rig artificial wings out of hawk feathers.

"Look victorious," I said.

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"Huh?"

"Look as if you had just made a conquest in love. I want you to pose for Victory."

"I make a better Venus," she sniffed. She was right. Her softness, her curves, her expression could not have been less appropriate for a goddess of battles.

"Yes," I sighed. "I'm afraid you do. Run along into the next room, dear. I have some work to do."

Palaeopoli, chief city of Samothrace, was a poor source for models of Victory. Its hetaerae were soft and languorous, like Patara. Its peasant folk, who farmed and fished for sponges, were robust without being regal. And there was no time to go hunting on the mainland. I wandered into the streets, knowing very well that I would not find what I sought, but loathe to remain in the house and do nothing. I must have walked for an hour when a man ran toward me shouting: "They've landed, they've landed!"

I stepped in front of him. "Who's landed?" I asked.

"One of those lights we've been seeing," he said. "We think it's the gods in a sky-chariot."

"Where?"

"On top of Mt. Saoce." And he was off to spread the news.

So the gods had landed. Somehow, I was not impressed. I was too much occupied with the problem of finding a Victory. Then it came to me how the arrival of the gods could solve my own dilemma. I wanted to sculpt a goddess. Why not engage a goddess as my model? Oh, I knew well enough that deities were capricious beings who turned men into crickets or stags at the drop of a helmet. On the other hand, they could be gracious and accommodating. Had not Venus accommodated Anchises to the point of bearing him Aeneas? If you approached them with humility and unfeigned admiration; if you remembered that they were human enough to like a neatly turned compliment, you could often as not get whatever you wanted. The very act of asking a goddess to pose for you was the highest of compliments. I refreshed my memory on divine genealogies and set off for the top of Mt. Saoce.

I met people along the way, curiosity seekers who wanted a peep at the gods. But one by one they fell victim to tired feet or timidity, and when the cyclopean walls and painted temples of Palaeopoli had become toy-sized in the blue haze of afternoon, I found myself alone. Minutes later I reached the summit of the mountain.

The sky-chariot of the gods was a great bronze ball which almost blinded me with its reflected light. But where were the divine pilots of this marvelous machine? I crouched behind a rock and awaited their appearance, half fearful, half expectant. I had not long to wait. A round door opened in the side of the chariot, and a god and goddess descended a ladder to the ground.

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They must have been seven feet tall, and they had translucent red wings which fluttered picturesquely in the wind, and fetching red antennae in place of ears. Whatever the goddess' name, she was Victory incarnate. She had everything: strength, poise, regality, even a pair of wings (everything except clothes, that is, and I could supply her with a suitable robe in my studio). If I could only engage her to sit for me!

They began to shuffle along the ground and poke around their feet. At first I thought that they had dropped something from the ladder. Then the god leaned down and picked a nondescript flower, which he dropped into a bag at his side. The goddess seemed to be collecting stones. Pretty soon they faced each other and exchanged words. Their language was unfamiliar to me, but their meaning was clear. They were having a quarrel. Angrily they separated and resumed their search. Before long the goddess began to throw looks at the god which seemed to say, "Let's make up," but he refused to meet her gaze, and she wandered disconsolately toward my rock. At close range, I saw that she was less than perfect. Her hair was so dishevelled that her feelers suggested barley stalks in a clump of weeds. And her cheeks looked as pale and lifeless as chalk. She was still a superb woman, but a somewhat untidy one.

"Hisst," I whispered.

She looked around her in panic. I stepped from behind the rock and fell onto my knees.

"Victory, Venus, Juno," I said, "whatever your name, incomparable goddess, I salute you."

She stared and strained her feelers toward me as if she had trouble understanding my Greek. I remembered that the gods had worshipers in many lands and could not be expected to speak our language exclusively.

"Please stand up," she said finally in a slow, precise manner. "You make me nervous down there."

I stood up and continued my speech.

"In fact, fair goddess, your beauty so beguiles me that I would like nothing better than to capture it in marble for all the world to honor. By the way, what *is* your name?"

"Victory will do," she said, looking pleased, and tried to smooth her hair. "I'm afraid I look a mess. I wish you had seen me before I started my trip."

"You have an elegant, windblown look," I said, "which is exactly what I want in my statue."

"But not what *he* wants," she muttered, and hurried to add: "I'm afraid I haven't time to pose, young man, though I appreciate your invitation."

I debated whether or not to abduct her. She seemed a gentle, even a shy goddess, and it might be that all she needed was a little coaxing. No pretty woman wants to seem over-zealous to have her statue

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made. Tentatively I reached toward her wrists.

I did not hear her companion steal up behind me.

He caught my arms in a metal-strong grip and I was powerless to loose myself. The goddess spoke to him in their foreign tongue, and for once they seemed to agree.

"We'll have to keep you with us for awhile," he growled.

"I'm sorry but that's impossible," I said. I told him my problem.

"We have a problem too. Orders from—Jupiter—not to be seen. When we blast off for Olympus, you can go home. If we let you go now, you might tell your friends about us."

The delay of several days could prove fatal. When Demetrius' emissary came to look in on me at the end of the week, he would think that I had run away and summon the soldiers. And even when released, I doubted that I could remember Victory's features well enough to translate them into marble. My situation was desperate.

They led me up the ladder and into the sky-chariot. Corridors branched in all directions, and each beckoned with a magical array of gadgets and colors. But my captors hurried me straight ahead into a small storeroom laden with boxes. The god glared at Victory as if she were to blame for my intrusion and left us alone together.

"I will fetch you some food," she said, and locked me in the room. I examined my cell. It was without windows, candles, or lanterns, but a light which seemed to emanate from the walls turned my white himation to a luminous purple. It was a cold light and I began to shiver. Enough, I told myself. I must think, not brood. My thoughts, naturally, turned to escape, and I did not intend to escape without Victory. Force would be useless. She would scream for help. But enticement might succeed. At first I considered offering myself as bait. Patara had often told me that I was irresistible (if a little plump from too much time with my Venuses). But I lacked wings and antennae and, besides, Victory seemed devoted to her lover (for so I judged him to be). What other enticements might persuade her?

At this point Victory returned with my supper: six pills in contrasting colors.

"I'm not sick, you know," I said.

"Eat them," she said, looking as if she were about to cry. No doubt she had exchanged further harsh words with her lover.

"Very well," I sighed. "But I'd prefer something more substantial."

I swallowed the pills. They tasted like dust.

"Do you *like* these things?" I asked.

"Not really," she said in a vacant voice. "But they keep me going and they don't take up much room. On a trip like this, we haven't space for luxuries."

"How would you like to sit down at a table and eat a haunch of wild

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boar and drink a wine aged in my own cellar?"

She looked as if she were trying to remember how her last real meal had tasted. An expression of beatitude crossed her face. "I'd love to," she said.

"Fine," I said. "Let's get—"

"But I can't leave my friend. He's cross enough as it is." And she burst into tears.

"Please don't cry," I said. "He'll get over it."

"No," she said. "We've been alone together for six months now and he told me this morning that I'm no more exciting than a food capsule. He said—sniff—that I'd lost my Mystery."

Just then I heard footsteps coming down the corridor. Closer and closer they came, and they seemed to represent my own doom marching toward me with inexorable feet. In that same determined fashion, Demetrius' guards would march up to my house and spirit me away to exile or worse. My mind worked frantically and, under the impetus of threat, arrived at the only possible solution. I whispered in Victory's antennae.

"Are you two going to gossip all day?" the god snapped as he strode into the room. "There's work to do outside." He gave Victory a push and I was once again left alone.

But that night Victory returned to my cell. She handed me a cloak and said:

"Would you mind tucking down my wings? I prefer to travel incognito."

"But won't they break?" I asked. "Anything stiff enough to fly—"

"They wouldn't get me off the ground," she explained. "They're purely decorative. Speed it up if you don't mind. *He's* a light sleeper."

I completed the task with dispatch and we left the ship as furtively as lovers outwitting a jealous husband. When we approached Paleopoli, Victory stooped like an old woman so that passers-by would not wonder at her excessive height.

Home at last, I roused Patara out of bed and introduced her to Victory.

"She's going to spend the night with us," I said. "I've engaged her as a model."

"I know damn well why you engaged her," Patara snapped, and ripped off Victory's cloak as if the goddess were a slave on the auction block. Scarlet wings billowed into the air and sent little breezes through the room.

"A goddess," Patara gasped, and dropped to her knees.

I drew Patara to her feet. "I'm sure Victory won't hold a grudge. After all, she was incognito."

"Of course I won't," Victory smiled at Patara. Then she looked at me as if to say, "But I *may* hold a grudge if you don't give me the enticement you promised."

"And now we have some work to do," I said quickly. Victory might be a goddess, but I had no

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intention of paying off until she had posed for me. Of course I did not expect her to pose for the finished marble statue; only for a small clay image which would serve as a model after Victory had returned to her ship. When she understood that I would be finished with her in a few hours, she posed with true regality. Her wind-blown look gave her the appearance of a woman standing on the prow of a vessel in the midst of a storm. I was certain that Demetrius, who prided himself on his fleet, would approve of the nautical effect.

When I had completed my clay image, I asked Patara to give Victory the promised reward. With the aid of hot irons, Patara crimped and twisted Victory's hair into curls over her forehead and built up an elaborate top-knot with cleverly inserted bunches of false hair. She whitened Victory's neck and arms with white-lead and reddened her lips and cheeks with alkanet. Finally, she coiled gold snakes around the godddess's arms and hung silver clusters of grapes from her antennae. The result was Mystery. With no room in the crowded sky-chariot for cosmetics, Victory had, in her lover's eyes, ceased to exist. Thanks to Patara's art, she was again a Woman.

After the transformation, I escorted her back to the sky-chariot. I hid behind my rockpile while she walked the last few hundred feet to the ship. The god was waiting for her.

He roared an angry greeting, but the moonlight fell full on her white shoulders and lit up the silver grapes suspended from her antennae. His tone softened and became almost a plea. I slipped off into the woods, confident that Victory and I had both benefited from our trade.

As for my statue, I completed it on schedule. Demetrius was pleased, though the antennae puzzled him. He would not believe my explanation.

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the pair

by . . . Joe L. Hensley

It had been a war of horror with no quarter asked. He'd seen his parents die and the Things had also maimed him.

They tell the story differently in the history stereos and maybe they are right. But for me the way the great peace came about, the thing that started us on our way to understanding, was a small thing—a human thing—and also a Knau thing.

In the late days of the hundred year war that engulfed two galaxies we took a planet that lay on the fringe of the Knau empire. In the many years of the war this particular planet had passed into our hands twice before, had been colonized, and the colonies wiped out when the Knau empire retook the spot—as we, in turn, wiped out the colonies they had planted there—for it was a war of horror with no quarter asked, expected, or given. The last attempt to negotiate a peace had been made ten years after the war began and for the past forty years neither side had even bothered to take prisoners, except a few for the purposes of information. We were too far apart, too ideologically different, and yet we each wanted the same things, and we were each growing and spreading through the galaxies in the pattern of empire.

The name of this particular plan-

What happens when the action in what is irreverently described as Space Opera is over with? How do the wounded and the maimed take up their lives again in this world of Tomorrow that must, in many ways, reflect the same urges and fears as ours? Indiana attorney Hensley explores this question.

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et was Pasman and, as usual, disabled veterans had first choice of the land there. One of the men who was granted a patent to a large tract of land was Michael Dargan.

Dargan stood on a slight rise and looked with some small pride at the curved furrow lines in the dark earth. All of his tillable land had been plowed and made ready for the planting. The feeling of pride was something he had not experienced for a long time and he savored it until it soured within him. Even then he continued to stare out over his land for a long time, for when he was standing motionless he could almost forget.

The mechanical legs worked very well. At first they had been tiring to use, but in the four years since his ship had been hit he had learned to use them adequately. The scars on his body had been cut away by the plastic surgeons and his face looked almost human now, if he could trust his mirror. But any disablement leaves deeper scars than the physical ones.

He sighed and began to move toward the house in his awkward yet powerful way. Martha would have lunch ready.

The house was in sight when it happened. Some sixth sense, acquired in battle, warned him that someone was following and he turned as quickly as possible and surveyed the land behind him. He caught the glint of sunlight on metal. He let himself fall to the earth as the air flamed red around him and for a long time he lay still. His clothes smoldered in a few spots and he beat the flames out with cautious hands.

Twice more, nearby, the ground flamed red and he lay crowded into the furrow which hid him.

Martha must have heard or seen what was happening from the house for she began shooting his heavy projectile "varmint" gun from one of the windows and, by raising his head, Dargan could see the projectiles picking at the top of a small rise a hundred yards or so from him. He hoped then that she would not kill the thing that had attacked, for if it was what he thought, he wanted the pleasure for himself.

There was silence for a little while and then Martha began to shoot again from the window. He raised his head again and caught a glimpse of his attacker as it scuttled up a hill. *It was a Knau.* He felt the blood begin to race in him, the wild hate.

"Martha!" he yelled. "Stop shooting."

He got his mechanical legs underneath him and went on down to the house. She was standing in the doorway, crying.

"I thought it had gotten you."

He smiled at her, feeling a small exhilaration. "I'm all right," he said. "Give me the pro gun." He took it from her and went to the small window, but it was too late. The Knau had vanished over the hill.

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"Fix me some food," he said to her. "I'm going after it."

"It was a Knau, wasn't it?" She closed her eyes and shuddered, not waiting for his answer. "I've never seen one before—only the pictures. It was horrible. I think I hit it."

Dargan stared at her. "Fix me some food, I said. I'm going after it."

She opened her eyes. "Not by yourself. I'll call the village. They'll send some men up."

"By that time it will be long gone." He watched her silently for a moment, knowing she was trying to read something in him. He kept his face impassive. "Fix me some food or I will go without it," he said softly.

"You want to kill it for yourself, don't you? You don't want anyone to help you. That's why you yelled at me to stop shooting."

"Yes," he admitted. "I want to kill it myself. I don't want you to call the village after I am gone." He made his voice heavy with emphasis. "If you call the village I won't come back to you, Martha." He closed his eyes and stood swaying softly as the tension built within him. "Those things killed my parents and they have killed me. This is the first chance I've ever had to get close to one." He smiled without humor and looked down at his ruined legs. "It will be a long time dying."

The trail was easy to follow at first. She had wounded it, but he doubted if the wound were serious after he had trailed awhile. Occasionally on the bushes it had crashed through were droplets of bright, orange-red blood.

Away from the cleared area of the farm the land was heavily rolling, timbered with great trees that shut away the light of the distant, double blue suns. There was growth under the trees, plants that struggled for breathing room. The earth was soft and took tracks well.

Dargan followed slowly, with time for thought.

He remembered when his ship had been hit. He had been standing in a passageway and the space battle had flamed all around him. A young officer in his first engagement. It was a small battle—known only by the co-ordinates where it had happened and worth only a line or two in the official reports of the day. But it would always be etched in Dargan's brain. His ship had taken the first hit.

If he had been a little further out in the passageway he would surely have died. As it was he only half died.

He remembered catching at the bulkhead with his hands and falling sideways. There was a feeling of horrible burning and then there was nothing for a long time.

But now there was something.

He felt anticipation take hold of his mind and he breathed strongly of the warm air.

He came to a tree where it had rested, holding on with its arms.

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A few drops of bright blood had begun to dry on the tree and he estimated from their height on the tree that the Knau had been wounded in the shoulder. The ground underneath the tree was wrong somehow. There should be four deep indentations where its legs had dug in, but there were only three, and one of the three was shaped wrong and shallower than the others.

Though he had followed for the better part of half the day, Dargan estimated that he was not far from his farm. The Knau seemed to be following some great curving path that bordered Dargan's land.

It was beginning to grow dark enough to make the trail difficult to read. He would have to make cold camp, for to start a fire might draw the Knau back on him.

He ate the sandwiches that Martha had fixed for him and washed them down with warm, brackish water from his canteen. For a long time he was unable to go to sleep because of the excitement that still gripped him. But finally sleep came and with it—dreams. . . .

He was back on the ship again and he relived the time of fire and terror. He heard the screams around him. His father and mother were there too and the flames burned them while he watched. Then a pair of cruel, mechanical legs chased him through metal corridors, always only a step behind. He tore the mechanical legs to bits finally and threw them at Knau ships. The Knau ships fired back and there was flame again, burning, burning . . .

Then he was in the hospital and they were bringing the others in. And he cried unashamedly when they brought in another man whose legs were gone. And he felt a pity for the man, and a pity for himself . . .

He awoke and it was early morning. A light, misty rain had begun to fall and his face was damp and he was cold. He got up and began to move sluggishly down the trail that the Knau had left, fearing that the mist would wash it out. But it was still readable. After awhile he came to a stream and drank there and refilled his canteen.

For a time he lost the trail and had to search frantically until he found it again.

By mid-suns he had located the Knau's cave hideaway and he lay below it, hidden in a clump of tall vegetation. The hideaway lay on the hill above him, a small black opening, which was shielded at all angles except directly in front. The cave in the hillside was less than a mile from Dargan's home.

Several times he thought he could detect movement in the blackness that marked the cave opening. He knew that the Knau must be laying up there watching to see if it had been followed and he intended to give it ample time to think that it had gotten away with-

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out pursuit or had thrown that pursuit off.

The heat of the day passed after a long, bitter time filled with itches that could not be scratched and non-existent insects that crawled all over Dargan's motionless body. He consoled himself with thoughts of what he would do when he had the upper hand. He hoped, with all hope, that the Knau would not resist and that he could take it unawares. That would make it even better.

He saw it for certain at the moment when dusk became night. It came out of the cave, partially hidden by the outcropping of rock that formed the shelf of the cave. Dargan lay, his body unmoving, his half-seeing eyes fascinated, while the Knau inspected the surrounding terrain for what seemed a very long time.

They're not so ugly, he told himself. *They told us in training that they were the ugliest things alive —but they have a kind of grace to them. I wonder what makes them move so stiffly?*

He watched the Knau move about the ledge of the cave. A crude bandage bound its shoulder and two of the four arms hung limply.

Now. You think you're safe.

He waited for a good hour after it had gone back inside the cave. Then he checked his projectile weapon and began the crawl up the hillside. He went slowly. Time had lost its meaning. *After this is done you have lost the best thing.*

He could see the light when he got around the first bend of the cave. It flickered on the rock walls of the cave. Dargan edged forward very carefully, clearing the way of tiny rocks, so that his progress would be noiseless. The mechanical legs dragged soundlessly behind him, muffled in the trousers that covered them.

There was a fire and the Knau lay next to it. Dargan could see its chest move up and down as it gulped for air, its face tightened with pain. Another Knau, a female, was tending the wound, and Dargan felt exultation.

Two!

He swung the gun on target and it made a small noise against the cave floor. Both of the Knau turned to face him and there was a moment of no movement as they stared at him and he stared back. His hands were wet with perspiration. He knew, in that instant that they were not going to try to do anything— to fight. They were only waiting for him to pull the trigger.

The fire flickered and his eyes became more used to the light. For the first time he saw the male Knau's legs and knew the reason for the strangeness of the tracks. The legs were twisted, and two of the four were missing. A steel aid was belted around the Knau's body, to give it balance, making a tripod for walking. The two legs that were left were cross hatched with the scars of imperfect plastic surgery.

Dargan pulled himself to his

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feet, still not taking the gun off the two by the fire. He saw the male glance at the metallic limbs revealed beneath his pants cuff. And he saw the same look come into the Knau's eyes that he knew was in his own.

Then carefully Dargan let the safety down on the pro gun and went to help the female in treating the male.

It should have ended there of course. For what does one single act, a single forgiveness by two, mean in a war of a hundred years? And it would have ended if the Knau empire had not taken that particular small planet back again and if the particular Knau that Dargan had tracked and spared had not been one of the mighty ones—who make decisions, or at least influence them.

But that Knau was.

But before the Knau empire retook Pasman it meant something too. It meant a small offering of flowers on Dargan's doorstep the morning following the tracking and, in the year before they came again, a friendship. It meant waking without hate in the mornings and it meant the light that came into Martha's eyes.

And Dargan's peace became our peace.

/S/ Samuel Cardings,
Gen. (Ret.) TA
Ambassador to Knau Empire

NEXT MONTH—

We meet

Hotlips Grogan, the gonest trumpet tooter of 2056, in
V. R. Francis' THE FLYING CUSPIDORS

That unhappy lover, *Ynkwysytyv*, of U. P. O., in
Edmund Cooper's THE LIZARD OF WOZ

The most unusual baby-sitter you've ever known, in
David C. Knight's THE AMAZING MRS. MIMMS

The first police robot on Mars, in
Harry Harrison's ARM OF THE LAW

A man who was to find peace, in
John Brunner's SUBSTITUTE GOD

and

**That fabulous adventurer, Gezun of Gadaira, in
L. Sprague de Camp's KA THE APPALLING**

—in FANTASTIC UNIVERSE

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two suns of morcali

by . . . Evelyn E. Smith

The idol was shaped like a handsome young man. The surface had a curious texture, as if skin rather than stone.

As the big interstellar liner nosed down to the airfield, a steady stream of reporters trickled out from the bar to meet her. The only notable on board, they knew, was Agatha Sherlip, the explorer, but she always made good copy. Though her veracity was sometimes open to question, her courage was not, and enough of the daring exploits on distant planets which she had recounted to the press, and subsequently expatiated upon in a series of best-selling volumes, had been substantiated to prove that a great deal of what she said was true.

And newspaper editors were always glad to have pictures of Miss Sherlip to brighten up their pages. As she posed at the head of the ramp leading down from the liner, the press marveled anew how, for one who was certainly no longer in her first youth, she managed to remain so wonderfully well preserved. Once one of the more sensational journals had hinted darkly of a mysterious fountain of youth far beyond Mizar, but the suggestion had been heavily pooh-poohed, for everyone knew that if Agatha had found any such thing, she

Evelyn E. Smith returns with this report on Agatha Sherlip's adventures. There is a deceptive simplicity to this story about a rather forceful woman explorer (immensely practical, too) who goes to Grimalkin prepared for anything, including an attack on her life, but not for what does happen!

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would have immediately drained the fountain, bottled the water, and sold it to the public at a high price.

She made a charming picture, her long yellow hair blowing about her suntanned face, her brief skirts blowing about her long brown legs, as she called, "Mind those crates, Henry!" over her shoulder.

"I am being most careful," replied a voice with a slight foreign accent, and a tall, handsome young man with a piece of sticking plaster on his forehead emerged, staggering—or, rather, surprisingly *not* staggering—under a prodigious number of packing cases. Porters rushed forward to help him, but Agatha waved them back. "Rare and fragile objects inside," she explained. "Henry knows how to handle them."

Henry grinned cheerfully. "Shall I take them to the car?" he asked, pointing to the pick-up truck.

"Please do, Henry, and then come back for the rest." Henry, followed across the field by the eyes of all of the female reporters, and some of the male as well, bore the boxes off with ease.

"Well, Miss Sherlip," the not-so-young man from the *Times* inquired, "was this trip as exciting as all the others? Or are the thrills of exploration beginning to wane at last?" He had vague hopes at which even he would have laughed, had they been put into words, that some day in the near future she might retire from the adventurous life and settle down, possibly with a deserving journalist who had, although she might not be aware of it, identified himself with her career from the very start.

Agatha smiled and tossed back her sun-bleached hair. "This was the most glorious trip I have ever had!" she cried.

All of them looked at her in astonishment. "More exciting than your journey down the man-eating rivers of Procyon V?" the *Standard* man asked.

She nodded happily.

"More exciting than your encounter with the savage saurians of Sirius VII?" queried the lady from the *News*.

"Oh, *yes*!"

"More exciting even than your disembodiment and subsequent reincarnation by the spirits of Fomalhaut IX?" the *Graphic* wanted to know.

"Far, far more exciting than all of them put together!" She flung her supple arms wide. "And far more thrilling. For on this voyage I discovered, beyond the stars, an intelligent life-form more interesting and unusual than any yet encountered in the Galaxy!"

The reporters pricked up their ears and turned their recorders to full power. She was continually running into new species, some of which had proven to be extremely interesting indeed. And intelligent life-forms were rare. "Tell us, Miss Sherlip, what were these creatures like?"

She smiled radiantly. "I shall tell

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you the whole story from the very beginning."

Seeing that this promised, like all of her narrations, to be a long one, the reporters sat down on the luggage of less lucky travelers who were forced to undergo the hoary ritual of customs (Agatha being exempt less because of her fame than because of the dangerous proclivities of her luggage, which frequently proved to be not only alive but ill-disposed) and listened attentively.

Well [she said] I won't bore you with the details of how I got to Regulus, because you can read about them in my *Edges of Nowhere*. No colonies out there, nothing but an outpost and a mine or two, so it doesn't pay for the stelliners to include the system in their regular runs. However, I was lucky enough to catch hold of a freighter that was wending its way out to Regulus IV—Snellinger, you know—to pick up a cargo of ore. No passengers allowed, but a few credits in the right places got me a berth on her. Filthy dirty and there were a few of the usual contretemps because no one will, in spite of the lipservice paid to female equality over the past few centuries, provide accommodations for ladies on any but the luxury liners. However, I am used to that sort of thing, and, if I do say so myself, handled the situation rather well. By the end of the trip, the crew regarded me either as a brother or as a terror.

The troops on Snellinger were delighted to see me again. I had been there before, some years back, to see whether the Regulus System were worth exploring, which it isn't.

Dreariest, most barren little agglomeration of planets you've ever seen. If it weren't for the rare minerals, I daresay the Federation wouldn't bother to keep an outpost there at all.

"Well, what brings you to our corner of the universe, Agatha?" the commandant asked heartily. "When you left, you said there was nothing of further interest in the Regulus System."

"There isn't," I told him, wishing to avoid a misunderstanding from the very start. "I'm interested in that new star I've been hearing about—Grimalkin, I think they call it—and this is the closest inhabited, in a manner of speaking, system to it."

The commandant paled and pulled at his mustache. "So those stories did get all the way back to Earth," he muttered. "Knew I should have stopped that fellow's mouth from the very start."

This was interesting because up until that moment I hadn't been sure but that I was on a wild mongoose chase. "Which fellow?" I asked, crossing my legs and lighting a cheroot.

"Just one of the miners telling tall stories. Didn't stop him. Thought it would entertain the men. Goodness knows, we have

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little enough to amuse 'em here. Aggie. . . ."

I slapped away his hand. "Let me speak to this miner," I demanded.

The commandant mopped his forehead. "He's dead."

"He is not either. Come on Freddie, cough up that miner. Remember—" I let my voice get soft, but not too tender "—the time you said you would do anything for me. This is your chance."

He sighed. "All right, Agatha, I'll have the man sent over." He spoke briefly into the communicator; then turned back to me. "Be a little time before he comes—the mine's on the other side of the planet."

I looked at him penetratingly. "Why do these stories of his bother you so much, Freddie?"

"Hate to see you haring off after nothing, Agatha. Hate to see you haring off. Agatha, dearest, won't you—?"

"No," I said. "What's this miner like? Where did he come from? How does he know about Grimalkin when our astronomers discovered it only a few years ago? Is he a reliable informant?"

"No, he isn't," the commandant replied eagerly. "Most unreliable. Makes things up. Spends all his time reading. Must've read every book in the library several times over. Probably that's where he got his story of a lost white race. . . ."

"So it's a *white* race, eh?"

This seemed to upset him. "After all, why shouldn't they be white? There are blue aborigines in the Altair and Pollux systems, mauve on Capella, green on Arcturus and Procyon, orange on—"

"Spare me the catalogue, Freddie," I interrupted. "You know I've been everywhere and seen everything."

The commandant's face flushed mauver than a Capellan's. "Just wanted to point out that white is about the only original color left," he said huffily.

I blew a perfect heart in smoke. "Wonder whether he means white like us or a really dead white?"

"Does it matter?"

"No, I suppose you're right. Another intelligent life-form is interesting enough in itself without one's needing to puzzle over the subtleties of its coloration. Besides, I suppose I shall soon be seeing for myself, anyhow."

"Seeing for yourself?" He stared at me in horror. "You don't mean you're actually thinking of—?"

I blew another smoke heart. "Why do you think I came to Regulus in the first place?"

A throat was cleared behind us, and, "You sent for me, sir?" a resonant tenor inquired.

It was the miner—I could tell from his clothes, and because a hasty washing had not succeeded in removing the professional grime. Otherwise he was a very presentable young man, tall, well-set up, and with an elegance and savoir faire

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that marked him as definitely a cut or two above the usual ore-digger.

"Yes," the commandant admitted, avoiding the man's eye, almost as if he were afraid of the fellow. "This lady would like to speak to you."

"If you don't mind," I put in, with the graciousness that has endeared me to natives throughout the Galaxy. The first thing one must do with informants is establish rapport.

His eyes looked me up and down and I knew I had established it. "At your service, madame," he murmured.

Although he spoke excellent Terrestrial, he was obviously not an Earthman. Human, of course; Terra had found, after sad experience, that it was wisest to bar all non-human intelligent life-forms from its outpost planets, except, of course, such aborigines as were inescapably indigenous. But I could not figure out from his accent which of the colonies he hailed from. Perhaps if I heard him speak some more. . . . But obviously the commandant's presence was inhibiting him. It was inhibiting me, anyway.

"Well, Freddie," I said, "no doubt you have lots of odd jobs and so forth to do around the planet. Why don't you just buzz off, and I'll interview Mr. . . . ?"

"Kruzmyt," the miner said, executing an impeccable bow as the commandant stalked off, muttering to himself. "Ilgu Kruzmyt. And whom have I the honor of addressing?"

I told him my name and offered him a cheroot, which he accepted and lit, after a quick glance at me to see what I was doing with mine. "Where are you from, Mr. Kruzmyt?" I asked casually.

"Here, there, everywhere," he answered, waving his arms expressively, if not explicitly. "I come, I go. I have been many places, seen many things."

"Where were you born?" I persisted.

"You might as well ask me who my father was," he shrugged. "The answer would be the same in both cases: I do not know. Is that why you have sent for me?" he asked, staring intently into my eyes. "To ask me of my origins?"

I could feel myself flush. "I understand that the legend of the mysterious white race in the Grimalkin system originated with you," I said abruptly.

His dark green eyes flashed. "It is not a legend. That star which you call Grimalkin actually consists of two suns, Bluuga, around which revolve eleven planets of assorted sizes, and Bnuuga, which revolves around the seventh of these, Morcali, a planet that corresponds to the description which I have read in your books of Paradise—only much better."

"In other words," I concluded, "an Earth-type planet."

He bowed. "Possibly. I have never been on Earth . . . although,"

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he added courteously, "I have heard it well spoken of."

"How about this lost white race?" I asked.

"Lost white race, tcha!" He gave an impatient click of his tongue. "How these stories do get exaggerated in the telling."

"What do you mean?" Not that I had really believed the improbable tale, you know, but I must admit I was rather disappointed.

"They are not lost. They have always been where they are; it is their home—the planet of their origin. As a matter of fact, you are more lost than they. Look how many light years away you are from your planet."

But I was interested in their whereabouts, not mine. "Tell me about them. What are they like?"

He looked at me in astonishment. "Like you. Or me. Depending on sex, of course. What else could you expect from an Earth-type planet? Similar conditions produce similar results. Isn't that what your interesting science says?"

I regarded him thoughtfully.

"You think I'm lying, eh?" he said with heat. "Come with me to Morcali and see for yourself. The people may be hostile to strangers, but you can always shoot a few until they learn who is boss." There was a relish in the way he said *boss* that somehow led me to think he didn't mean me.

I crossed my legs. "Look, Mr. Kruzmyt, I'm an explorer, not an agitator. If trouble comes my way, I can handle it, but I don't go out of my way to stir it up. And the Federation frowns upon its citizens' going about waging private wars. I've already been warned about that."

"You could hardly call it war," he said eagerly, "or even trouble. Just a handful of ignorant natives; what could they matter?"

I raised my eyebrows. "Funny for you to call them that. Especially as you are one of them . . . or mean me to think so, anyway."

I watched his reaction narrowly, but he had himself well in hand and just smiled. "Why don't you check the truth of my story yourself? Come with me to Morcali." His voice grew soft. "It is spring on Morcali now. As a matter of fact, it is always spring on Morcali."

What was the fellow really after, I wondered. Rather too much trouble to have put himself to merely for the sake of my fair white body; besides, he could have had no idea who might respond to his carefully spread legends. Might just as easily have been Major Hathaway—fine chap and a splendid explorer, but hardly the alluring type. "Rather an expensive jaunt, you know," I temporized.

"You are worried about money? You need not be. I will help you to meet your ends. And mine. . . . Morcali is a very rich planet," he went on hastily. "All sorts of minerals, gems, natural resources abound there."

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"I mustn't forget to take along my pick and shovel."

He frowned, and somehow I shivered, because he apparently expected people to shiver when he frowned. "No, I am serious. The people of Morcali, being simple savages, you know—unlike me, since I have acquired an education through diligent reading of the excellent though limited library available in the recreation center—worship the living god Morcal-Anri-Kruzmyt, who is enshrined in the capital city, Calin. Now this god has in his forehead—"

"Don't tell me, let me guess—a single eye, which is a perfect red ruby larger than a goose's egg."

He stared at me. "No, a star sapphire. But how did you know?"

I pulled up my legs and rested my chin on my knees. "I've done some reading myself, you know."

He flushed. The color wasn't quite right—or was it my imagination? "So, you don't believe me, eh? Well, ask your commandant if I was not found on one of the Grimalkin planets by a spaceship that stopped there for repairs."

"How come they didn't report this paradise?" I asked, forcing myself to be skeptical.

"Briklus, Grimalkin XI, is not an Earth-type planet," he said, with obviously labored patience. "It is a barren piece of rock to which I had been exiled for political reasons which, I am sure, would not be of interest to you. I told the captain of the ship that I had been marooned there by another craft. He took me here because this was his destination. And it seemed they needed miners, so I stayed, although I am not," he smiled at the unnecessary statement, "a miner by profession. No one else but you knows I am other than I seem."

"Why are you telling me this, then?"

He grasped my wrist. The texture of his hand didn't feel quite right either, but I made allowances for the power of suggestion. "Because I see you are someone I can trust. Now you must trust me."

I didn't trust him, not one bit, but I was damned curious.

"Yes," the commandant said wearily, "it's quite true that he was found on Grimalkin XI by a ship that went off course and stopped there to patch up a meteor hole in its hull." He sighed. "He said the captain of the ship that had marooned him was his wicked uncle, which he seemed to feel was explanation enough. Only it turned out that the name of the ship supposed to have left him wasn't registered on any of the planets in the Federation."

I shrugged. "Well, there are lots of possible explanations for that. Pirates, for one thing—lot of them around and they're certainly not registered."

He looked at me coldly. "Oddly enough, that is just the explanation he offered us. Afterward. When he'd learned more Terrestrial and

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had been rooting about a bit in the library. I don't like this, Aggie—don't like it at all."

"Seems perfectly straightforward to me," I said, though, now that I'd had time to think things over, I realized it was a perfectly straightforward lie. I knew Kruzmyt's type—bit of an adventurer; you meet the kind all over the Galaxy. In fact some people have been unkind enough to apply the term to me.

"Well, there's one thing more. Didn't like to mention it, don't even like to think about it, but it rather sticks in my craw." I raised my eyebrows. questioningly. "The captain who picked Kruzmyt off Grimalkin XI made the routine report on planetary conditions, and there was one little factor that, well, bothered me."

"And that was?"

"It has no atmosphere." He tugged at his mustache. "And this Kruzmyt was living quite happily—well, not happily, I suppose, but he was living—without a spacesuit, without a shelter of any kind."

I got up. There was definitely more here than met the eye. "Freddie, I want to borrow your second-best scoutship. Looks to me as if this were a matter that could bear a little investigating."

The commandant was a little sticky about lending me the ship, but I reminded him of several tender episodes that had occurred the last time I was on Snellinger and in the end he gave in, as most men do when I really turn on all the voltage. However, I was curious about his attitude; it seemed more vehement than circumstances appeared to warrant. "Why are you so set on keeping me from Morcali?" I asked him.

"Well, if you must know, because I more than half believe Kruzmyt's story," he burst out. "And, you know, of all the intelligent life-forms that have been discovered on scores of planets, we have never turned up another example of the one we have found to be most dangerous of all."

"Don't be so damned theatrical," I told him. "You mean man, I suppose."

"I do mean man. Leave 'em alone, Aggie. Human beings who can breathe when there is no atmosphere, learn to speak a language fluently and adapt to a totally alien culture in a couple of months . . . who knows what other powers they might have? And, now that Kruzmyt has read the entire *Encyclopaedia Britannica* from cover to cover, who knows what dangerous knowledge he might be bringing to his people if you take him back?"

"Sorry, Freddie," I said, "but you're just making the prospect more and more alluring."

"Promise me this at least, Agatha," he insisted, catching hold of my wrist, "that you'll try not to antagonize them."

"Antagonize them!" I replied, indignantly wrenching myself free. "When have I ever antagonized natives?"

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"How about those wars you started in Aldebaran and Castor?"

"They didn't start because I antagonized the natives; it was because the natives antagonized me!"

Freddie sighed and pulled his mustache. "You're a stubborn woman, Agatha," he said. "But promise me you'll be careful."

"I promised myself that a long time ago," I assured him.

I must say that Kruzmyt was a perfect gentleman through most of the two-month trip. And self-possessed. Didn't even turn a hair when I said casually, as I checked the gauges on the oxygen tanks, "I do hope Morcali has an atmosphere I can breathe. Because I'm rather partial to air, you know."

He grinned. "So they told you that story, did they? And you came, nonetheless. You're very brave, Agatha—I may call you Agatha?"

"Matter of fact, that was the very thing that determined me to come," I said quickly. "Proved, whatever else you were, you certainly weren't a terrestrial. But why is it that you don't need air? I thought you said Earth-type planets produced Earth-type people?"

"Oh, with variations," he shrugged. "Bound to be some differences, of course, since conditions can't be exactly the same. After all, Morcali has two suns; it revolves around one and the other revolves around it. Gives us a different psychology, you know." He gazed tenderly into my eyes. "I'm looking forward to seeing a Morcali sunrise with you. . . . Agatha."

Without meaning to, I nervously blew a heart-shaped smoke ring.

He looked at it. "Odd, how the very same shape can assume wholly different meanings in different cultures. For example, what you call a heart symbolizes the tenderest emotions to you, does it not?"

"Yes," I said. "And to you?"

He smiled. "To us it is merely a rather crude phallic symbol."

I hastily blew a free-form smoke ring. "Tell me—er—Ilgu," I asked, "how is it that with all your—er—attributes, not breathing and so on, your people are not more advanced?"

He was silent for a moment, either choosing his words or making up a story. And he was breathing; I noticed that. Perhaps he was an optional breather. "It is because they are in the power of a corrupt priesthood," he said at last. "Individual initiative is considered sacrilegious." And he heaved a sigh.

"That has something to do with your exile, hasn't it?" I asked shrewdly.

He nodded. "I had not planned to tell you this yet, Agatha, but I am the rightful ruler of Morcali. You may remain seated," he added graciously, although I had not stirred in my chair. "Because I sought knowledge, I was deprived of my title and my temporal powers and banished to a barren planet from which I was rescued by your fellow beings, to whom I shall always owe

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a debt of gratitude. Rest assured, Agatha, that when I am restored to the rank that is rightfully mine—"

"If you think I'm going to be on the restoration committee, or be the restoration committee itself, you're crazy," I said hotly. "I'm not going to be used as a cat's claw. Stealing that sapphire from the idol's forehead is what's supposed to turn the trick, isn't it?"

He smiled ruefully. "You are too clever for me, Agatha. True, the people—poor simple savages—believe that the power of the god rests in the sapphire. . . ."

"Does it?"

"Agatha! You, an educated terrestrial, to—to suggest a thing like that. But, of course, you are joking."

I gave him a weak smile. I had run into odoriferous set-ups before, but this one was stinking up all of Leo. "You can steal it yourself now that you're going to Morcali," I suggested.

He shook his head. "Impossible."

"It wouldn't look good for him if they caught the king, or whoever you really are, stealing the sapphire, would it?" I demanded. "But it's okay if an alien snaffles it because they can always burn her at the stake or eat her, or whatever you do." Although I was joking, of course, I watched his face, and he didn't look nearly horrified enough. I should have paid more attention to Freddie's warnings.

"My people are not that primitive," Ilgu said, in what I could not help but feel was too off-hand a manner. "Listen, Agatha, if *you* are caught stealing the sapphire, I can rescue you. But, if *I* am caught, you wouldn't know what to do." I must have still looked dubious, for he continued, "And the sapphire would be yours. It is as blue as your eyes, Agatha, and almost as beautiful."

I am, I must admit, partial to sapphires, but still I shook my head.

"How would you like to be Queen of Morcali, Agatha?" he asked softly. "As it happens, I do not have a wife."

I had been offered marriage by potentates before, mostly to shut my mouth. "Uh, uh," I told him.

Ilgu's tone changed from the melting to the brisk. "Well," he said, "how about a straight business proposition, then?"

"I'm listening," I said.

We had the terms all fixed up by the time we neared Morcali—so much in gems and precious metals, so much in art and artifacts. I knew I was sticking my neck out by trusting him at all, but, what the hell, a girl in my profession has to take risks. I'd done it before and made out all right.

We made planetfall on Morcali just at the double sunrise. First, pale green streaks appeared along the horizon, broadening to wide bands of jade and turquoise as the blue-green disk of Bluuga began to come into view. Then the jade was shot through with amethyst,

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deepening to purple and, with the emergence of the red-violet sphere of Bnuuga, the sky became a clear lavender, but a brilliantly vivid lavender, not the muted twilight mauve of Earth. A bird began to sing an odd trilling melody.

I never found out whether or not it really was spring all the time on Morcali, but it was spring when we came. Ilgu had told me where to land the ship, so we came to rest in a small valley hemmed in by low, round, pearl-toned hills. Trees more graceful than the terrestrial varieties thrust shapely branches laden with both blossoms—huge and scented—and jewel-like fruit up into the amethyst sky. Through grass of a greener hue than the grass on Earth, a purple stream rippled over translucent blue and violet crystals. The whole valley appeared to have been untouched by human—or humanoid—hands except for neat iridescent metal plaques affixed to the larger trees. Each was inscribed with the same legend in a script which, of course, I could not read. And there was air, wonderful, tangy, invigorating air. I breathed in vast lungfuls of it.

"We will have to wait for some time," Ilgu told me, as he courteously handed me out of the ship. "The god sleeps only when both suns have set."

"But how can an idol sleep?"

"I never said he was an idol!" Ilgu was reverting to primitivism. He knew what I was thinking because he followed his statement with a shamefaced laugh. "The . . . temple will be deserted then because, when the god sleeps—is supposed to sleep—the priests go to their quarters to sleep also," he explained. "No one to see you effect your entrance and exit."

"Oh," I said. "And in the meantime?"

"In the meantime we stay in this little valley. Is it not charming?" he added, with a proprietary interest based, I supposed, on the assumption that, as king, he felt the whole planet belonged to him. "All the fruit is edible. Help yourself." He plucked a bunch of transparent aquamarine berries from a bush and handed them to me with a courtly bow. I had met kings before, and I was suspicious. His manners were much too good for an authentic member of the royal fraternity.

"But won't some of the natives come across us?"

"They wouldn't dare!" He pointed to the signs. "Those declare this area to be—to be tabu. . . . Come, Agatha, let us relax, while we wait." He moved nearer to me.

"Relax one step closer, Ilgu," I warned him, "and you can steal your own sapphire."

He gave a strained laugh. "Well, you are king for the day, Agatha." And he sat down with his back against the wine-dark bole of a tree and stared into the distance. The light took on an increasingly greener tinge as Bnuuga began to sink in the south.

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I'd better watch out for him after I'd completed my mission, I thought, as I sprawled on the grass at a safe distance from him and began to eat the fruit, which was, by the way, delicious. Lucky I'd got the terms of our contract in writing. It wouldn't stand in an Earth court, I knew, and maybe not even in a Morcali one, if they had such things, but it did give me a sort of hold over him, as it wasn't the sort of thing he was apt to want published.

I was a little sorry I'd agreed to do the job because it meant I could not go out and have a look at the country and its inhabitants. True, Ilgu had said the natives were hostile, but that didn't mean he had to be telling the truth. However, I had accepted the job and Agatha Sherlip's word was her bond.

"Ilgu!" I leaned toward him persuasively. "While we're waiting, why couldn't we take the scout and go visit some other city—on the other side of the planet? Perhaps the na—your people will be friendly after all. At any rate, they would not be able to communicate with Calin in time to warn the priests, would they?"

His face darkened. "My people are never friendly. Hostility toward strangers is part of our religious doctrine. And they would know about our arrival because there is a very complete communications system. Primitive, true, but nonetheless efficacious.

"But how is it worked?" I wanted to know. Then I heard the soft beating of the drums. "Oh, I see," I answered myself.

"You *see*!" He clutched my arm with his alien hand. "What do you see?"

"Figure of speech. I mean I hear —I hear the drums. That's what you mean, isn't it?"

He wiped his forehead. "You hear them too? . . . I—I thought. . . ."

"Aren't the drums what you meant?"

"Yes, yes. Of course. . . . The drums."

And, as they continued to beat, I suddenly thought of something. Now it was my turn to clutch his arm. "Ilgu, we wondered how you were able to breathe on Briklus. . . ."

He looked at me with wary eyes.

"But how did you get there in the first place? If your people are primitive, they don't have space travel. Or do they?"

His lips tightened. "No, they do not. I cannot answer your question now, Agatha. Not until after you have secured the sapphire.

And I couldn't get anything more out of him by way of explanation for the rest of the time we were in the valley. Bluuga began to set; it was growing almost dark. "Is it time now?" I asked Ilgu. He shook his head and pointed to where the rosy-purple rim of Bnuuga was peeking coyly over the hills. The drums continued to beat, louder and louder. I was beginning

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to get nervous, and so was Ilgu. "Your people send a lot of messages," I ventured.

He mopped the perspiration—aquamarine it was—from his face again. "I—I have never heard the drums before, that is, heard them beat so continuously before. . . . I must have underestimated . . . but so far as Regulus, how could that be?"

He was talking to himself more than to me. And suddenly all I wanted was to get out—away from this uncanny planet—and the hell with all the gold and jewels. "Let's go back!" I proposed.

"No, no, no!" His face was pale, a distinctly off-shade of pallor and it wasn't just the light either. "The people—the people are suspicious, but they do not know of our presence here. Or, if they do, they do not know what we are after. . . ."

"Surely they would guess."

"No, because to them what we plan would be an unthinkability. You and I are sophisticates, Agatha," and his smile was almost a risus sardonicus. "You must try to understand them in the light of their own primitive psychology. They could not imagine such . . . utter blasphemy."

That, I felt, might be at least partly true: he wanted me to steal the stone for him, because, though he could free himself from superstition enough to conceive the idea of the theft, he could not bring himself to execute it. He pressed my hand. His was colder than I had ever felt human flesh before. "You'll be all right, Agatha, I assure you."

I wasn't so assured. But he kept between me and the ship and I didn't want to make a run for it and thus precipitate open hostilities between us.

By then I realized that he was perfectly capable of killing me if he saw I was going to be of no further use to him. Besides, I couldn't help thinking of what Freddie and the others back on Snellinger would say if I turned tail and ran back like that. And all because of a lot of silly drums; nothing more, really. They were growing louder.

The shadows lengthened in the south as Bnuuga set. I got to my feet. "Now?"

Ilgu shook his head again and pointed to a greenish glimmering in the east. "Bluuga will be up any minute. Better get some rest," he advised.

I went to sleep in the grass, lulled by the rhythm of the drums. Ilgu remained underneath his tree, between me and the ship. I didn't know whether he was asleep or not.

Both suns were high in the heavens when I got up. Time apparently had little meaning here—for me, anyhow, although there appeared to be some discernable pattern for Ilgu in the movement of his suns. I washed in the purple stream and we ate a silent breakfast together.

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Ilgu prepared it, for it was tacitly agreed that I was not to be trusted in the ship. After breakfast, he took one of my cheroots without waiting for me to offer it, and exhaled smoke that shimmered a pale purplish-olive in the alien atmosphere.

"I'd better brief you now," he said in a taut voice, as Bnuuga began to set and the light greened. "The instructions will be rather complicated, and you must obey them to the letter."

They were extremely complicated, and puzzling too. Bnuuga had risen again before I could figure out just what it was I was supposed to do. And even then I couldn't understand. Ilgu refused to explain. "Please believe me, Agatha. I know this planet and you do not. Should anything go wrong, I will not be able to save you unless you have followed my directions with the utmost precision."

"But it all sounds like a primitive ritual," I objected. "In fact, it sounds even more like something out of a fairy tale."

He didn't seem to understand quite what I meant; perhaps he was too nervous. "There is a very good reason for everything we do." He tried to smile. "You have trusted me so far, Agatha, why will you not trust me to the end?"

I had not trusted him; I did not trust him; I would not trust him. But there was nothing I could do, and so I agreed to carry out his elaborate plans, curious though they were.

And finally when Bnuuga began to drop slowly in the south, Bluuga also lowered in the west. "Come, it is time." Ilgu got up and threw away his cheroot. "Remember, always keep behind and don't speak to me or make any noise."

I nodded. He went off toward the east, turning to wave to me, as if I were staying behind. I waved back. When he had gone a hectometer or so, I rose and circled round to his left, being careful to keep out of his line of sight. From time to time he paused, to smell a flower or fasten his sandal, giving me a chance to catch up with him, but he never looked back to see if I were actually following. At the time it never occurred to me that I could simply turn back to the ship and desert him; I was already too much involved.

And so we proceeded on our strange journey toward the hills, he going on as if he were alone, never giving a sign that he was aware of my presence. I was reminded of Orpheus, but this Orpheus, so far as I could see, was more likely to be leading me into the underworld rather than out of it. A strange, sweet, and uncanny darkness began to drop down upon us. From the dusk the birds sang queer songs, and bushes and shrubs silhouetted into grotesque shapes. The drums were beating softly, insistently. I had been under an alien sun on many an alien planet, and none so

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nearly like Earth as this, and yet none so completely different. I was frightened, not for the first time in my life but for the first time in that way. None of my previous fears had had this peculiar aura of intangibility.

I stumbled and fell headlong into a bush. Its leaves caressed me, and the branches seemed to hold me gently, as if reluctant to let me go. Ilgu made no move to help. Only the fact that he slowed down a trifle showed his awareness of my plight. I realized that in some way I was not supposed to be there, but couldn't whoever—whatever it was, see me as well as him? Or was the perceptive sense on some level beyond or behind my comprehension?

I pulled myself away from the bush—regretfully, for it smelled so sweet—but I couldn't help making some noise. Ilgu's back stiffened, and then relaxed as I resumed my silent plodding along behind him. It was getting more difficult to follow him now that utter dark had fallen, the black, impenetrable night of a moonless planet, flecked with a star pattern that was all wrong for me. It was too quiet, and then I understood why. The drums had stopped.

For the first time in my life I began to wonder why I was where and who I was, why I had chosen the restless, roving life of the adventuress instead of being content to stay on my own planet, leading the healthy, normal, bovine life of a healthy, normal, bovine woman. What was I looking for? What was I trying to prove to myself? That I was better than anyone else? I knew that already.

At last we came to the crest of the hill and looked down upon Calin. And the people who had built that magnificent city of pale iridescent metals and soft dull stone in colors I had never seen before were certainly not primitives. Primitives could not have built that delicate filigree of bridges that interlaced the buildings, nor devised the crystalline pavements through which the purple waters could be seen flowing over their jeweled beds.

I looked at Ilgu's back. He clearly was not going to go any further. One by one the rose-violet lights of the city dimmed out as I watched from the hill. And then, finally, the blue lights of the huge pearly building that fitted Ilgu's description of the temple went out too. It was time. And from here on, the job was mine alone.

I descended, stumbling over the rough terrain, which grew smoother and smoother the closer I came to the outskirts of the city. The streets were deserted, as Ilgu had told me they would be. When the god slept, all slept. I thought it odd that a people as xenophobic as Ilgu had described his race to be should not at least have had guards posted about. Yet to guard them against whom? Strangers? There were no strangers, for this race was unknown to the rest of the Galaxy.

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Lost . . . or perhaps it was the rest of us that were lost. There were many things Ilgu was going to have to explain to me, but the final explanation I would have to give to myself.

There was the temple looming ahead of me. I had not expected to reach it so soon. It almost seemed as if the crystal pavements had moved along with me, carrying me in the direction I desired. I paused uncertainly in the shadow of the huge edifice—so gracefully designed that it had not seemed nearly as large from the hilltop—afraid to enter. But I was equally fearful of facing Ilgu empty-handed. I realized it now; he meant to kill me once I had secured the jewel. Yet I was not sure, and, if the jewel meant so much to him, it would give me a bargaining power I did not have now.

A broad flight of stairs led up to the building in the manner traditional with temples the universe over. I mounted the steps one by one. Though they were shallow, my breath came short and harsh. I was growing a little old for this sort of thing, and I thought that, if this were not my last mission in the sense that I would not return from it, then it would be the last one I would ever undertake.

I took the sleep bomb Ilgu had given me and tossed it inside, where it exploded with a faint pop, releasing a luminescent cloud of soporific gas. I put on my gas mask and went inside.

The interior was vast, cavernous, dark, except for the faint glimmering of the gas, and silent. I longed to flash on my torch. Everyone should be asleep, but Ilgu had warned me not to show a light under any circumstances. I paused and, after a while, I could see a little. The dimly-viewed decor was lavish beyond anything I had ever seen, and somehow secular—more like the interior of a magnificent hotel lobby than a temple, but how could I presume to interpret an alien culture—and this was a very cultivated culture indeed—in m[illegible] own terms?

The huge passageways that ra[illegible]ated out from the center of th[illegible] lobby like the spokes of half a giant wheel were there, and the light which marked my ultimate destination glimmered faintly down one.

It grew larger and larger as I approached and finally resolved itself into a single turquoise flame flickering beside the recumbent figure of the god itself.

The idol had been shaped in the form of an extremely handsome young man, executed very much in the ancient classical style, and tinted in the lifelike colors with which the Greeks too had originally embellished their statues. So marvelously fashioned the image was that it actually seemed to be alive and sleeping. To my surprise, it had three eyes instead of one, and two of them were closed. Only the third, the enormous, truly magnifi-

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cent star sapphire regarded me unwinkingly.

What a shame to take the stone and leave its even more precious setting! I tried to pick up the image —which wasn't large as such things go . . . actually very little more than life size. But it was nonetheless too heavy for me to lift more than a few feet from the floor. I let it drop—rather, I lowered it carefully, for I was reluctant to run the risk of damaging so beautiful a piece of workmanship. The surface, as I touched it, had a curiously resilient texture, as if it were skin rather than stone, and I reflected again on how advanced the people who created a work of art like that must be and what a pity it was I couldn't spend a day or two with them so that I could write a comprehensive volume about the planet. Still, the profits from my royalties have never equaled the resale value of my loot. That sapphire alone would bring more than three best-sellers would.

Taking a firm grip on myself, I wrenched the gem loose. And then I was aghast, fearing—in the surge of primitivism that welled up in me in those uncanny surroundings—that I had somehow injured the idol. But fortunately there was no socket underneath—that would have made the whole situation much uglier—just a bit of the skin-like covering came loose. The stone appeared only to have been glued on, which seemed very careless treatment of a jewel with such intrinsic as well as superstitious value. But again I was judging these people by my standards, not theirs.

Slipping the stone in my pocket, I turned and ran from that weird place as rapidly and as silently as I could. As I reached the end of the corridor, I could not help looking back over my shoulder and, for an instant, a trick of that flickering blue-green light made me think that the idol was leaning on one elbow staring after me. I closed my eyes and shook my head to clear my vision. When I looked back again, the figure was as it had been.

I made my way without mishap to the hilltop just as Bnuuga started to rise and pour its red-violet radiance over the nacreous rocks. Ilgu was waiting, his back toward me. We plodded back toward the valley, as we had come, not signifying awareness of each other's presence, not speaking. As we reached the ship, Bluuga, large and coldly green —like the eye of a greater god than the one I had just despoiled— emerged over the horizon. The drums started to beat again.

Ilgu shuddered. He stood still for a long moment; then slowly turned toward me, like a mechanical doll. "You have it?" he whispered hoarsely.

I put my hand toward my pocket, but I did not take out the stone. "Yes," I said. "You want it, I suppose?"

"No, no, you keep it! The rest of the things I promised you are

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in the ship. For . . . heavens' sake, blast off before the suns get any higher." The sound of the drums was increasing in volume.

I looked inside the ship. The luggage compartment was crammed with crates of the wine-red wood. Apparently Ilgu had been even busier than I. I came to the door of the airlock. "You also promised me an explanation," I reminded him.

"I'll write you a letter," he said. "But, please, blast off now, before they discover what's happened."

"At least tell me what the drums mean!" I yelled, as he pushed me into the airlock.

"I don't know what they mean!" he shrieked, opening the inner door and thrusting me inside. "When I left Morcali, the drum had never been heard, or heard of, on the planet. Now, blast off, damn you!"

"I've got to take inventory first!" I cried.

"You can take it in space! If everything isn't according to the contract, sue me!"

Both doors clanged shut. This was one instance where discretion was the better part of squalor, so I blasted off. It was going to be rather a lonely trip without any company, even Ilgu's. Of course the ship could be put on automatic, so I wasn't bound to the control board, but it was a bit hard having no one to talk to, for I am not, as you know, the strong, silent type.

The first few days I amused myself by opening the crates and taking inventory of their contents. Everything Ilgu had promised me was there—jewels and ingots and art treasures. He had played absolutely fair with me. I had misjudged the poor fellow simply because he was a liar, which the best of us can be at times, but now I knew his heart was in the right place—figuratively speaking, of course; for all I knew of his people's anatomy, he wore his heart in his heel.

A week passed and I began to grow a little tired of my expensive new toys, even of dreaming about the luxuries they would bring me upon my retirement, for I had definitely decided to retire now—while I was still young and able to enjoy my possessions. Seven more weeks before I would hit Snellinger. Even Freddie would look good by then. Was Freddie the man with whom I would choose to spend the rest of my days? Somehow he was not the ideal I had been subconsciously seeking.

I sat by the control board, although the ship was efficiently pursuing its own course by itself, and took out the sapphire to cheer me. It was the most beautiful jewel I had ever seen. Looking at the big blue stone, I could almost bring myself to believe that it did have powers above and beyond its financial one. And, with no one there to watch me, I could afford to be a little ridiculous. I rubbed the sapphire.

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A hand reached over from the co-pilot's seat and took the stone from my limp fingers. "My eye, I believe," said a voice with a slight foreign accent.

I didn't dare turn to see who was sitting beside me in the co-pilot's seat. But I knew. I would have liked to faint just then, but I'm not the kind of woman who can do that sort of thing. I just sat there, rigid. "Did—did I do that?" I pushed the words through stiff lips. "Summon y-y-you?"

"By rubbing the stone, you mean?" the voice asked. Curiously enough, it seemed to be laughing. "Hardly. I've been here for some time. I just couldn't resist the temptation to startle you."

I manged to turn my head toward him. It was he, the figure in the temple all right. What had I got myself mixed up in? He didn't seem to be angry, but that wasn't necessarily reassuring; it could be merely divine detachment with the ultimate penalty the same as that awarded by divine wrath.

"The stone itself has no particular value," he went on, "beyond the merely commercial one which is, of course, considerable. Of course the ignorant natives do think it has supernatural powers, which helps me to consolidate my rule, and which is why I wear it on my forehead in that rather ridiculous fashion."

"How did you get here?" I asked witlessly.

He laughed. "My dear girl, what a question to ask of a god!" I could feel myself paling. "You really fell for Ilgu's story hook, line, and sinker, didn't you?" he went on, in a more kindly tone. "Please notice my deft use of your idiom."

"It was a lie then—what Ilgu said to me!" I exclaimed, seizing desperately on any chance of passing the muck.

"Not really." The god smiled again. "He was merely trying to interpret our culture in terms of yours, and he isn't terribly bright, you know. . . . Nor is it," he added musingly, "an easy task."

"He must have thought the stone had mystic powers, otherwise why did he have *me* steal it?" I asked defensively.

The god laughed and tossed the sapphire in the air. "Well, I'm not saying he's completely free from superstition, but his real reason in having you steal the stone was to get me to follow you, so I'd be out of the picture for a while. In all of your people's books he read, the god—and I'm afraid he had a rather confused idea of what a god was; you mustn't confuse linguistic aptitude with real intelligence, you know—always follows the thief who steals the stone. Ilgu thought that if he could get me to go after you, he'd have another chance at the kingdom. He's always trying to seize the kingdom; fellow has a one-track mind. My cousin, you know—from the feeble-minded branch of the line. He didn't think I'd have time to stop to teleport

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him back to Briklus before I joined you, because he underestimated my powers. By the way, in case you're interested, he's back on Briklus now, so busy teleporting air for himself from Morcali that he can't teleport himself back. Our usual treatment with criminals. Simple, but effective."

"He—he can teleport?" So that's how he'd got all the crates into the ship in such short order!

"Of course. Our whole family is talented; that's why we're the rulers. He can't do nearly as much as I can, of course. And he didn't think I could reach out beyond our system, let alone as far out as Regulus. Matter of fact, I had never thought of trying before. Probably—" he grinned at me "—with a little practice I could reach much farther than that."

I looked at him. My mouth was unbecomingly open.

"There are lots of questions you should be asking," he pointed out. "I have other powers too, especially useful in police work. I can share the sensory perception of any of my subjects, without his or its knowledge. I've been using Ilgu's eyes and ears—though not his taste buds; your food is really quite abominable if you don't mind my saying so—which is how I learned to speak the flawless Terrestrial on which you have not yet complimented me."

"It's quite remarkable," I managed to say.

"It was from reading your books through his eyes, that I got the idea of the drums," he said joyously, chucking the sapphire up in the air again. "Gave old Ilgu a turn, didn't they? I think I'll commute his sentence after a while; between us we've really given him a hard time. . . . He'd never have been able to seize the kingdom, of course, even if I hadn't stopped to dispose of him. Just now I'm the most popular ruler Morcali ever had; the king who gave the people the drum. And, frankly, I'm rather glad to be leaving the planet for a [illegible] drums were such a thump-[illegible] cess I can't get the people to lea[illegible] off beating them. Got on my nerves too, after a while."

The sapphire described a glittering arc in the air and, missing the god's careless hands, disappeared through the grille leading to the air-conditioning unit. I gave a yip of dismay. "Don't let it trouble your pretty head, Agatha," the ex-idol said. "Plenty more where that came from."

"But, if that's so, why did you follow me?"

The god leaned over and gazed ardently into my eyes. His were bluer even than the sapphire. "Can't you guess, Agatha?" he breathed.

As I have said, the ship was, fortunately, on automatic controls.

"Well," the man from the *Standard* said impatiently, "go on."

Agatha spread her arms wide. "But that's all. These crates which

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Henry is taking out to the truck contain the fee Ilgu paid me. I suppose the whole thing wasn't terribly ethical, but—" and she favored the press with an enchanting smile "—it all worked out all right in the end, didn't it?"

"But you haven't explained anything," the *Graphic* man protested. "For one thing, why did this Ilgu make you walk behind him all the way?"

"So the god wouldn't see her through his eyes, silly," the lady from the *News* snapped, "and know she was coming along. What I can't understand was how come none of the natives happened along in that valley."

Agatha smiled. "Oh, that's easily explained. I found out later; the people of Morcali have a very strong sense of private property. That valley was part of Ilgu's personal estate, and, just because he was a condemned criminal it didn't mean his property rights could be violated. The signs on the trees simply said *No Trespassing*. Even the king wasn't permitted to go there bodily without permission."

"And you really are going to retire?" the *Graphic* asked incredulously.

"Oh, yes—yes, that was my last trip. Anything else would be an anticlimax, don't you think?"

"If you ask me, I don't believe a word of it," the man from the *Times* said—tactlessly, of course, but he was no fool and he sensed the blight descending upon the passion he had cherished so long in secret.

Agatha was unperturbed. "That is your privilege."

"But what happened afterward?" the lady from the *News* asked eagerly. Then she blushed. "I mean after you and—er—the god reached Regulus. Only he wasn't really a god, of course?"

"Of course not," Agatha agreed. "We were married when we reached Snellinger. Freddie was best man. Good sport, Freddie."

"Then . . . .?" With one accord the ladies and gentlemen of the press turned to look at the stalwart young man with the sticking plaster on his forehead, as he emerged from the airlock with another tremendous pile of crates.

"Henry, dear," Agatha said, "I think these ladies and gentlemen would like to speak to you."

"Delighted." Henry put down the boxes and smiled obligingly all round.

"I could hardly call him Morcal-Anri-Kruzmyt," she explained, "and since Anri is his given name, I call him Henry. Morcal is merely an honorific."

"But that's—that's miscegenation!" the *Times* exclaimed in horror, which was real enough even though the precise reason for it was not quite clear even to the reporter himself. "There are severe penalties for that!"

"Not that it's ever happened," the lady from the *News* murmured, with a frank smile at Henry, "be-

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cause we've never before found a species worth miscegenating with."

"And even if your story isn't true—" the *Times* persisted.

"I thought you were positive it wasn't," Agatha smiled.

"—even if it isn't true and he's only a boy whom you picked up in the colonies—" here several of the pressmen clicked their tongues in disapproval "—he'd need a quota number. The government's very strict about that and it takes years. As if you didn't know. . . ."

"I think you'll find the Federation will think twice before it antagonizes so powerful a ruler as Henry," Agatha said with sweet shrillness. "It would be a little hard to apply the customary penalties to a teleport, wouldn't it? And don't forget that the people of Morcali still have Ilgu on Briklus, with the vast resources of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* fixed firmly in his head. No, I think the Earth government would prefer to keep on friendly terms with a people that has such immense potentialities for peace and, of course, war."

"I don't believe he has any special powers at all," declared the heartbroken skeptic from the *Times*. "It's my belief he's just a non-quota immigrant you're trying to smuggle onto Terra."

"You think so?" Agatha raised her eyebrows. "Try to lift those then." She pointed to the pile of dark red wooden crates the divine Henry had set down.

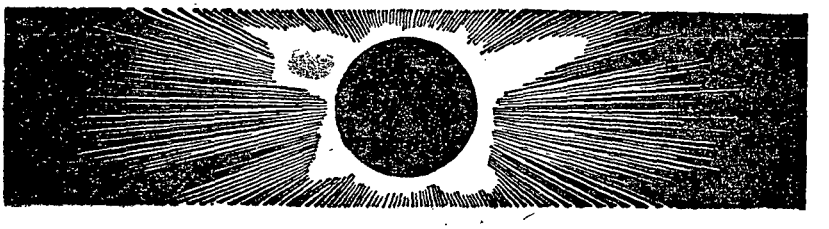
The reporter strained, anxious to show at least that he was still in good condition despite the encroachments of the middle age that rendered him no competitor alongside the splendid youth, but he couldn't even lift a single box. However, and this helped salvage his pride, neither could the other reporters, nor even the field porters who came, anxious to display their skill in their own particular province, and who failed, bewildered and resentful.

"All right, Henry," Agatha said. "You can take the boxes to the car."

The young man smiled amiably at his audience, picked up the crates, and, balancing them all on one hand, bore the load off.

"It's a trick," the man from the *Times* said stubbornly. "That's all. Just a trick."

"Maybe," the lady from the *News* sighed, as she glanced after Henry's retreating form. "But, if so, it's a real cute one."



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egghead

by . . . Robert Bloch

Any expression of nonconformity or difference of taste was suspect, meaning a maladjusted personality.

SHERRY was the first one to notice.

I picked her up in front of the sorority house about eight and I'll never forget the way her eyes got wide as she stared at me.

"Why, Dick!" she gasped. "You are letting your *hair* grow!"

I couldn't help it. I turned red as a beet. "Yeah," I mumbled. "Kinda looks that way, doesn't it?"

Her eyes got wider. "And what's that you're wearing? I mean, *what* on *earth*—?"

"It's a double-breasted suit," I told her. "Picked it up last weekend, when I went home. I figured it was sort of different."

"Different? It's *horrible!* I'll bet nobody's worn one of those things in *years*."

I shrugged. "Sorry. But I thought, since we were only going to have breakfast together, it would not make much difference." I didn't want to see her face, so I made a big production out of looking at my watch. "Come on, it's after eight, and I've got a nine-o-clock this morning. We'd better hurry."

She didn't answer. I took her arm and steered her into the drugstore on the corner. It was crowded,

Robert Bloch, who will be remembered for his TERROR OVER HOLLYWOOD *in our June 1957 issue, and the much-discussed* A WAY OF LIFE *in the October 1956 issue, turns to a problem of interest to all of us these days—conformity and how the urge towards it may create new standards, new values, new ethics.*

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as usual, and the juke was going. The big screen was behind the counter, but there were smaller ones in most of the booths. Only the two little booths at the rear didn't have juke-screens, and of course they were vacant. Nobody wants to sit where you can't see the screens. Right now Buzzy Blake was doing Number One—the Extra-Cola commercial.

Sherry made a face. "I suppose we'll just have to wait for a place," she said.

"Haven't got time," I told her. "Let's grab a bite in one of the back booths."

I sat her down before she could object, and pretty soon the waitress came up with two mugs of coffee.

"What'll it be?" she asked.

"Cruller," Sherry said.

The waitress looked at me and I shook my head. "No cruller. I want poached eggs. And you can take this coffee back, too. I didn't order it."

"You don't want coffee?"

"I think I'd prefer cocoa instead."

They were both staring at me. I wanted to sink right through the floor.

Sherry leaned over the table. "Dick, what's wrong with you? Are you *sick?*"

"No, I'm fine. Just wanted to try something new for a change. Is there any law says you've got to have coffee and crullers for breakfast every morning of your life?"

"But *every*body does."

"I'm not everybody. I'm me."

The waitress walked away, mumbling. Buzzy Blake finished the Extra-Cola song, and somebody dropped a dime for Number Two. Fuzzy Fluke, singing about King-Size Tissue. It had a real catchy beat, but Sherry wasn't listening.

"Dick, what's *happened?*"

I sighed. "I don't want to talk about it now. It's just that I've made up my mind. I'm sick and tired of being like everybody else on the campus. Wearing the same clothes, eating the same food, listening to the same things, thinking the same thoughts. At least I thought I might experiment a little."

"*Experiment?* Look, you better go see your Psych Advisor. I mean it."

"I'm all right. This is just sort of—well, you might call it a gesture of protest."

"*Protest?*" She was really steamed. "I want you to march right over to the barber-shop and get a decent crewcut and then put on some *sensible* clothes. If you think I'm going to the game with you looking like that this afternoon, you're *mistaken.*"

"I thought we'd skip the game," I told her. "I mean, who cares? Two gangs of apes fighting over a blown-up pig bladder." Then came the thing that bombed her. "Besides, we'd have trouble getting there, anyway. I sold my car."

"*What?*"

"Yesterday. I figured walking's

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good exercise. As long as I'm right here on the campus all the time, what do I need a car for, anyway?"

"But *every*body has a car, even the janitors! Suppose you *did* want to go to the game, the stadium's half a mile away, how could you *walk* to—"

She was bombed, all right. Just then somebody put on Number Three, Muzzy Miles and his outfit, and I couldn't hear the end of her sentence. But she was getting up, leaving the booth.

"Hey," I said, "what about your breakfast?"

"Never mind, I'm not hungry. And don't bother to get up. I don't want to be seen with you. Now, or *ever*."

"But Sherry—"

She was gone. And Muzzy Miles and a big symphonic chorus did a big production number on Ulcer-Seltzer, with trick camera-work that showed the whole gang singing and dancing inside a set that looked just like your small intestine.

It was just the sort of thing I should have been interested in, because I was sure the Prof would ask questions about it in the next Consumotivation Class. But I didn't care about it, or about my meal when it arrived. The poached eggs tasted awful.

So I skipped the cocoa and hurried down the street to the Administration building. I'd lied to Sherry, because I really *did* plan to see my Psych Advisor.

That was old Hastings, of course, and his office was over three blocks away. It felt kind of funny to walk that far, and I knew a lot of people were hanging out of their car-windows and staring at me as I tramped along all alone on the sidewalk.

Halfway there I noticed another guy walking, across the street. It looked like Mark Sawyer, but I couldn't be sure. Mark and I never had anything to say to each other—of course, very few people ever talked to him.

Anyway, that didn't matter. My appointment with old Hastings did.

The girl told me to go right in. Hastings sat there puffing on his pipe and smiling at me. He had the closed-circuit screen on, and I guess he was monitoring some class or other, but when I sat down he turned it off.

"What's the story, Dick?" he asked.

I shrugged. "No story. Like I said when I called you, I want to change my program to an all-elective course."

He smiled and puffed. "You're a senior, aren't you, Dick?"

"You ought to know." I pointed at the desk. "You've got my file right there in front of you."

Old Hastings didn't bat an eyelash. "Sharp orientation reflex," he said. "Bet your father is the same way. He's a pretty big operator up at Major Products, isn't he?"

"President," I said. "What's that got to do with it?"

"I wish I knew." Hastings stop-

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ped the nonsense with the pipe and pulled out a regular cigarette with a cancer-canceller filter. "Look at it my way for a minute. Here's a bright student, doing excellent work for over three years. He tests out perfectly normal all along the line. Excellent adaptability, a conformity-rating of better than ninety-five per cent, routine channelization of all aggressions; a potential company man by any standards. I know, because I've just re-checked your personality profile, semester by semester. So here you are, taking a Junior Exec Course, and doing well. Next year, when you graduate, you'll go right into the Home Office with your father's company. But now you come to me and say you want to drop your studies and switch over to electives. What electives, might I ask?"

"Well, English Lit., for one."

"You mean Advanced Copy-writing?"

"No, English Lit. It's down in my bulletin, under Liberal Arts."

Hastings chuckled. "Really, Dick—you must have your old bulletin, from your freshman year. Right? We cut out the whole Liberal Arts Department last semester, didn't you read about it in the paper? I'm quite sure there was a squib on it somewhere. This is a state university, not a private college. Legislature decided not to appropriate any more funds for frills."

"What about Philosophy?" I asked.

"Out," he murmured, and he wasn't smiling, now. "Don't try and tell me you didn't hear about *that*. We fired Professor Gotkin the year you came here. A notorious egghead."

"But I thought—I mean, I hear he's still around. He has a house just off the campus, doesn't he?"

"Unfortunately, there's no way in which the university can compel a man to vacate his own property. But I assure you, Professor Gotkin has absolutely no connection with this institution."

"Don't some students go up to his place, for some kind of private seminars?"

Hastings ground out his cigarette. "Let's stop sparring," he said. "Have you been seeing Gotkin? Is that where you got these ideas about changing your courses? The truth, now."

"I'm not on trial."

"Not yet."

I gulped. "Is it a crime to want to study Philosophy?"

"Don't play stupid, Dick. Of course it's no crime, any more than it's a crime to study, say, the history of Russia. Not if the purpose of your study is to get documentation on the evils of Communism. But suppose you didn't have such a sensible, clearcut purpose and were just reading out of what you believed was idle curiosity? Consciously or unconsciously you'd be laying yourself open to dangerous ideas. Then your study would be a criminal matter. You see that, don't you? Well, the same holds true for

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Philosophy, or any of those borderline subjects. They're poison, Dick. Poison."

He stepped over to the window. "Two hundred million people out there," he murmured. "Two hundred million today, and in another generation there'll be three hundred million. Each and every one of them equipped with drives, goals, needs. Each and every one of them vital to our economy as a consumer. All of them dependent upon the skills and techniques of a very few specialists, trained to direct those drives, set up those goals, stimulate and channelize those needs. That's our job here, training the specialists. You're studying to be one of them. Isn't that enough of a positive challenge for you? Why bother with the doubts and illusions of Philosophy?"

"I don't know," I said. "And I can't answer until I've investigated."

Hastings scowled. "All right, you might as well have all of it. I took the liberty of getting in touch with your father this morning, after you called. He told me that under no circumstances should you be permitted to alter your program."

"I can insist on a hearing. I can take it to the Dean."

"Please." He came around the desk and put his hand on my shoulder. "You know what that would lead to. Now I have another suggestion. It's obvious you've been brooding about this whole business for quite some time. Perhaps you've been subject to pressure from outside influences which you don't care to talk about. That's your affair.

"On the other hand, I'm your Psych Advisor, and your mental health is my affair, too. I recommend an honorable solution. Put in for a two-week leave, for special therapy, and enter the hospital here. Let me handle the treatment. We'll do it with narco-hypnosis. There won't be any conflict involved; when you give us the names of these people—students or faculty members who have been feeding you all this nonsense about rebellion—there'll be no guilt-feelings. It's all very open and above-board. And I'm sure it will clear up the whole problem."

I jerked my hand away. I knew his receptionist was listening through the open door, but I didn't care if I shouted.

"All right, to hell with it! You can tell my father whatever you like. Tell him his son is an anti-social egghead for all I care. And as for you, you can take your psychiatric couch and shove it!"

Then I got out.

I went back to my room and waited. Three times the phone rang, and as soon as I recognized my father's voice I hung up.

The fellows came in from classes around noon, and I could hear them going through the hall. None of them stopped at my room. Word must have gone around fast.

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Finally, at one o'clock, when most of them were going back to classes, my door opened.

A tall, skinny guy with glasses stood there blinking at me. At first I didn't even recognize him.

"I'm Mark Sawyer," he said.

"Oh. Come on in, have a chair."

"I—I heard about this morning."

"Who hasn't?" I grinned at him. "Don't tell me you came around to say you're sorry."

"No. I came around to say I'm glad." He smiled up at me. "Surprised, too."

"Why be surprised?" I shrugged. "Sooner or later, a guy just gets fed up. You know."

"Yes, I know. But somehow I never thought you would. None of us did."

"Us?"

He hesitated. "Well, you aren't the only one, you know."

I forced a grin. "I was beginning to feel that way. When you stop to think, there's over twenty thousand students enrolled here; it gives you sort of a funny feeling when you figure that maybe you're the only one in the whole bunch who doesn't want French fries with his hamburgers."

"I understand." He hesitated a minute. "But are you sure you did not just lose your temper, on impulse?"

"Look, Sawyer. In the past six hours I've lost my girl, got my father sore at me, and told off Hastings. Chances are I'll be expelled before the week is out. Does that sound as if I was acting on impulse?"

"I guess not." He stood up. "How'd you like to be my guest this evening? Sort of a bull-session, to meet a couple of other fellows with the same ideas. We usually get together once or twice a week at a friend's house."

"Well—"

"You might find it interesting. If you feel like it, drop over. Anytime after eight. We meet at Professor Gotkin's house."

He left, then, and the rest of the afternoon passed quietly. But there was a buzzing in my stomach, and when suppertime came I didn't want to eat. I waited until it got dark and then I slipped out and headed for Professor Gotkin's house.

I walked through alleys, wondering if this was the way *they* always walked; the Commies, the pinkos, the eggheads. It gave me a funny feeling, a feeling of being *alone*. The game was over now, and the cars were packing the streets; I could hear the horns blaring and the radios going and the guys singing. And I was alone, stumbling through an alley. A dark alley. A blind alley. *Alone*.

Then I came to the big old house where Professor Gotkin lived, and I wasn't alone any more. Mark Sawyer met me at the door and put out his hand, and he pulled me in, down the hall and through the double-doors of the old-fashioned

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study. I blinked in the sudden glare.

The brightness came from one of those old-fashioned overhead lighting-fixtures; come to think of it, I didn't see a single TV-lamp in the place, and no TV set, either. Instead, the room was filled with the kind of furniture you wouldn't expect to find anywhere but in a museum. Overstuffed chairs, big sofas; real pre-atomic pieces.

Old Gotkin came up and held out his hand, and he was a museum-piece himself. He had long hair, positively bushy, and the oddest glasses I ever saw. They were rimless, so help me.

But what surprised me the most was the guys he introduced me to. There must have been almost a dozen other students in the room, and he took me around and introduced me to them. I don't know what I'd expected, really; I suppose I thought all of them would look something like Mark Sawyer. But he was the only oddball in the whole crowd. All of the other fellows looked perfectly normal and Ivy League, with crewcuts and hornrims. A couple of them even wore army gab pants and Service emblems. There were three girls, too, and I was a little shocked to realize I'd met them all before; two of them were friends of Sherry's, and the third was last year's Junior Prom Queen. Everybody seemed to be acting perfectly natural, and they all smiled at me, but I guess they could tell I was upset.

Professor Gotkin showed me to a big chair—it was a funny-looking thing, no functional lines at all, but it felt kind of comfortable—and then brought me a glass of something that turned out to be beer.

Only it was *dark,* and tasted strange.

"Glad to have you with us," he said. "According to what Mark tells me, you *are* with us, aren't you?"

Mark Sawyer leaned over my shoulder. "I hope you don't mind, Dick. I took the liberty of explaining to the gang just what you had to say to me this afternoon."

I nodded. "Then I guess there's nothing more to explain."

"There's one thing you can tell us," Professor Gotkin murmured. "What are your plans for the future?"

"Well, I suppose I'd better quit school before they call a hearing and throw me out. After that, I guess I'll have to find a job on my own. My father'll be pretty sore."

"What sort of job?"

I thought about it for a moment. "Factory or manual labor. If I try for anything better, they'll check up on my record here. But maybe that won't be too bad. I mean, it's just five or six hours a day, and I'll have security."

"Security." Surprisingly enough, it was the Junior Prom Queen who spoke. "I thought you were the one who made that remark about not

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liking French fries with your hamburgers."

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Everything. Do you know how the average worker lives?"

"Well—"

"Take an ordinary job and you'll be a prisoner for life, in a world of French fries, surrounded by the faceless mob that eats, drinks, dresses, talks and acts on the basis of conditioned reflexes. You'll live in a prefabricated house with a prefabricated wife and a bunch of prefabricated kids. You were taking a Junior Exec course, weren't you? Then you must have studied Depth Motivation Technique. What did you think you were learning that stuff for? In order to use it on consumers, *against* consumers; and who are they? Manual workers, factory workers, the army of conformists and conformity-worshippers you're rebelling against. And now you think you'll find a solution by joining their ranks? Don't be ridiculous!"

"Then what *should* I do?" I asked.

Professor Gotkin stepped in front of me. "We've been discussing that, before your arrival," he said. "We advise you to stay right here in school."

"But I can't. I mean, they won't let me change my courses, they told me so."

He shook his head. "That's the whole point. You don't change any courses. You make your apologies, take a week off to rest your nerves, and go right back into your studies in Junior Exec."

For a minute I couldn't believe my ears. "You mean, keep on doing what I've been doing? And graduate next year, and go into the Corporation, and buy a ranchhouse, and marry the kind of a girl the Corporation wants me to marry—a girl who'll nag at me until we can buy a bigger ranchhouse? Be an Exurbanite, and drive a new car back and forth to work until I keel over with a heart attack and they drive me to the cemetery in a new hearse? Is this your idea of a solution?"

"A necessary step *towards* a solution," Mark Sawyer said.

"I don't get it."

"Listen, what you've just said isn't new. Everybody in this room has sounded off about the same thing, in practically the same words. But all of us are still here, going to school. And all of us will be graduating, taking regular jobs; doing our best to work our way up into key positions. Don't you see that this is the whole secret?"

"Secret of what?"

"The secret of rebellion. The only way a minority can ever hope to win. By *infiltration*. It's Professor Gotkin's idea."

He smiled. "Not original, I assure you. I borrowed it from the Communists."

"But—you *are* a Communist, aren't you?" I asked.

He frowned. "Not at all. A Com-

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munist, actually, is the follower of a political doctrine, a believer in community property, who seeks to overthrow other governmental systems by force, if necessary."

"That isn't the way I heard it."

His frown deepened. "That's right, I'd forgotten. They don't teach that definition any more, do they? To you, a Communist is anyone whose ideas differ from those of the majority—or, rather, from the ideas superimposed upon the majority, who accept them without thinking. A Communist is an egghead is an individualist is a psychotic, isn't that how it goes?"

"Something like that, yes."

"And you think that any expression of nonconformity, any difference of taste from that of the mathematical majority, is an automatic indication of a maladjusted personality?"

"I suppose so."

"Still, *you* are aware of such a difference in yourself?" His frown smoothed into a smile. "Don't bother to answer that, Dick. Because we all feel the same way. Only we've learned not to be ashamed of it. We know that the history of this nation, and of every civilized nation, is a history of constant rebellion. It was political rebellion which won our freedom, social rebellion which expanded our frontiers, intellectual rebellion which resulted in invention and progress. Only in recent years have we fallen into the error of orienting our philosophy around an expanding economy, dependent upon a constant and complacent consumerdom. Only in recent years has it come to be a shameful thing to be 'different'—that individuality is equated with antisocial attitudes.

"I know, because I've lived through the change. The get-in-line-and-stay-in-line doctrine was imposed as a necessity during the War, and somehow we never managed to abandon it after the shooting was over. Mass-media dedicated itself to the noble purpose of selling masses of goods to the mass-audience. From that it was only a step to the mass-merchandising of ideas. Then came the real Communist scare, we began to be afraid of eggheads—and everybody who criticized was given that label. It's still a label, today, but soon it may be down on the books as a legal synonym for traitor. Unless we take decisive steps to prevent it."

"But what good will my returning to school do? How will it be helping to rebel by staying in line?"

"Through infiltration," the Professor said. "Don't you see? We're all doing it. Granted, the process is a slow one, but it will bear fruit. If, within ten years or even twenty years, every student in those rooms will have attained a position of importance in the outside world, there will be a chance to reverse the trend. A legislator here, a banker there, a business executive, an advertising magnate, a newspaper man, a TV producer—people

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like that are in a position to influence key decisions from the top level."

I glanced around. "There's only eleven of us," I said. "A drop in the bucket."

Mark Sawyer cleared his throat. "You'd be surprised if you knew how many there really were," he told me. "Not everybody's here tonight. I'll bet we have almost fifty on the campus."

"Fifty out of twenty-three thousand students?"

"Fifty of the *best*. The individualists, the clear-headed ones. And this isn't the only campus in the country, remember." Professor Gotkin drew himself up. "Since I left—since I was fired, rather—I haven't been idle. My connections with colleagues all over the nation have served me well. There are groups like these scattered throughout the schools, and in other places where you'd least suspect it. Army camps, labor unions, fraternal organizations; yes, and the very strongholds of the *status quo*. Most of our followers are young men and women like yourselves, yes, and it is from their ranks that we'll draw our real strength in the future. But even now we've got a slight toe-hold in high places. Would it surprise you if I revealed that we've already enlisted several important educators in our ranks? And no less than six Congressmen? And two *practicing* 'industrial psychologists' who specialize in Depth Motivation techniques?" He chuckled. "We're not entirely impractical, you see. Nor entirely helpless. But there's much to be done, and we can use able assistance. We need men like you, Dick. What do you say?"

I hesitated. "How can I be sure that you're telling me the truth?"

"A sensible reaction. And one I'll be glad to honor. It so happens that there are lists available to me. You are welcome to inspect the names of your—shall we call them fellow-eggheads?—right here in school. As the situation warrants, I'll acquaint you with other members of the movement in the outside world; we hope to be eventually forming little key-groups in selected industries and professions in time to come."

"You aren't going to start a revolution? You're sure of it?"

"Of *course* we are! But not an armed revolution; we don't intend to overthrow the government by violence. Ours will be a much more far-reaching and long-lasting rebellion. A revolution of ideas. We're going to take the world away from the pitchmen and their puppets and give it back to the individual, the free citizen. Are you with us?"

I nodded.

"What do you want me to do?" I asked. "Where do I begin?"

"You begin by going back to your Psych Advisor. Apologize to him. Tell him you had a fight with your girl, tell him you've been under a strain. If he suggests rest or treatment, take it. But no narco-

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hypnosis, of course. You understand why."

I nodded again.

"Then, return to your classes. I'm sure there'll be no real difficulty. You have a brilliant record. Your father and your girl will come around. Just carry on as you did before this all happened."

I stood up. "But don't I *do* anything? I mean, aren't you carrying out any kind of program at all here on the campus?"

"You mean some sort of underground protest movement or sabotage?" Professor Gotkin shook his head. "We aren't ready for that yet. In a few years, perhaps, when our group is stronger. Meanwhile, about all we do is proselyte. And that's where someone like yourself will come in handy. Maybe we can work out a system; a way of bringing in more potential recruits. It's worth thinking about, and planning for."

"Will there be meetings like this regularly?"

"Yes, but not according to any schedule. We can't afford to attract too much attention at this stage of the game. And another thing; we don't believe it wise to congregate in social groups or be seen together anywhere outside this house. The notice of the next meeting will come to you from one of your fellow-members. I suggest, therefore, that you take steps to memorize their names."

"An excellent idea." I made a circuit of the room slowly, shaking hands with each of my fellow-conspirators. As I did so, I asked each one to repeat his or her name to me.

"Don't forget, now," Professor Gotkin cautioned.

"I won't."

"You'll be notified when to come again."

"I'll be here."

And, about a week later, I was. A lot happened in the meantime. I'd seen old Hastings and the Dean. I saw my father, too, and then there was a special two-day trip which nobody knew about. That is, not until I walked into the next meeting at Professor Gotkin's house, with the Security Officers right behind me.

We caught fifteen of the lousy eggheads right then and there, and of course we got hold of the old buzzard's secret lists. Every last one of the subversive rats on the campus was rounded up, and even I was surprised at some of the big wheels who were in on the plot.

But it was like that all over the country, they tell me. And it made a real stink—I guess you must have read about it in the papers, though.

Of course I don't claim credit for the whole thing. It was Dad's idea in the first place, when he got wind of some kind of Commie activity down here at the school. He even supplied me with the little portable wire-recorder I'd hidden in my coat when I went to Gotkin's house the

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first time; and that clinched it. No matter what he and the others said, they couldn't deny the evidence—it was all down on tape, the whole subversive pitch, even their names in their own voices.

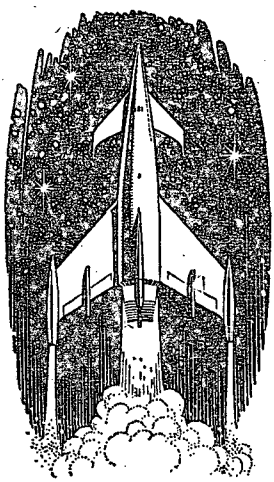
Right now I guess they're being held on open charges, but that's just a formality. Dad is in pretty thick with all the right people, and they say that in just a couple of weeks Congress is going to pass a Treason Law to take care of the whole gang. It'll be retroactive, of course. They're even talking about something called the Egghead Amendment to the Constitution.

Naturally, I'm pretty happy about the way things worked out. It wasn't much fun having to pretend to be psycho, even for a little while —it must be awful to actually *be* that way, all queer and alone.

But it's all over now, and I'm back at school, and Sherry's with me, and Dad bought me a new convertible, and I guess right now you might say I'm kind of a hero.

It wouldn't surprise me a bit if I was elected President of the Class of 1978.

ATMOSPHERE EXPLORED IN POLAR AREAS



THE SOVIET INTERNATIONAL Geophysical Year Committee reports that "The Central Administration of Hydro-Meteorological Service of the U. S. S. R. Council of Ministers and the Central Northern Sea Route Administration of the Ministry of Merchant Marine" (*revealing administrative titles!*), in keeping with the I. G. Y. program, are conducting research into the upper layers of the atmosphere in the Arctic and Antarctic by vertical launchings of meteorological rockets. Rocket sounding of the atmosphere is being conducted at the high-latitude observatory of the Arctic Research Institute on Hayes Island (adjacent to Franz Josef Land) and on board the survey vessel *Ob*, of the Academy of Sciences Antarctic Expedition. During the last four months, six launchings of meteorological rockets were made at Hayes Island. The instrument-laden part (or "head piece") of the rocket contained electric thermometers and thermal and membrane manometers to measure air temperature and pressure. *Measurements taken were radioed from the rocket by means of telemetric apparatus.* The first launching of a research rocket from the *Ob* is said to have been made in the Davis Sea, in the area of the Mirny South Polar Antarctic observatory, on December 31, 1957. After the flight, the headpiece of the meteorological rocket *was found* and delivered to the ship. Further launchings are planned.

And then what?

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the truth about flying saucers

by . . . Morris K. Jessup

It is not enough to tabulate sightings. Research begins—and doesn't end—with tabulations and classifications.

UFOLOGY has already been introduced to readers of FANTASTIC UNIVERSE by the competent pen of Ivan Sanderson but I do not remember seeing any completely comprehensive presentation of this newest and, possibly broadest, of all fields of study.

Ufology started its meteoric career as a world-wide "flap" on Flying Saucers, about 1947-48. It was soon recognized that there was more in the air than merely Flying Saucers, for the aerial phenomena were observed in many forms. In order to include ambulating clouds, perigrinating balls of orange colored light, fireballs, and other manifestations, along with the dirigible "structures" called Flying Saucers, the U. S. Airforce adopted the more comprehensive term: UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS, immediately shortened in Americanese to UFO (pronounced either *you-fo* or *oo-fo;* I prefer *oo-fo*: Author).

Most of the so-called research done on UFO has been limited to observing and reporting on a host of hitherto disregarded aerial objects which seemed to have the

UFO researcher and author Morris K. Jessup, author of the recent EXPANDING CASE FOR THE UFO *(Citadel), said some unkind things about SF in his article in the January issue, which prompted the pained reaction, in the Seattle* Cry of the Nameless, *that he'd been writing "from the shelter of a damp flat rock." Hm . . . Mr. Jessup returns, more softly this time, with more on UFO's.*

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characteristics of intelligence, or at least of intelligent control. To this was added a long string of personal contact stories wherein earth people like us met space entities or space people, talked to them and purportedly had ridden in their space craft. Some of these claims include trips to the Moon, and planets such as Venus and Mars. Occasionally some serious investigators discussed contingent factors such as gravity control, methods of propulsion, etc., and a tremendous lot of theorizing has been done as to whether the space entities are friends or foes. Religious connotations have been a constant overtone in Ufology.

Nevertheless, only a handful of students in the bizarre field have had the alertness and imagination to recognize the true extent of the problems arising from the ten-year "flap" which we have gone through. To those of us who considered all of the oddities, discontinuities and unexplained phenomena that came to our attention, it became apparent several years ago that the UFO were but the newest recognized phase of the whole chimera of borderland science—or, more accurately: borderland knowledge. And, borderland knowledge takes in much more territory, most of which is hardly more than discovered, much less explored.

This tremendous scope began to dawn on us when we began trying to find "explanations" for UFO—an effort which has developed into a major indoor sport. Many study clubs have been formed around the general theme of Flying Saucers, and have usually been known as either "research" or "investigating" organizations. Actually there has been very little of true research; and investigation has often been confined to tabulation of such reporting as has come to the attention of the curious, whether they be clubs or individuals. (Of course, *research* does begin *with tabulation and classification,* especially in observational, as opposed to experimental, sciences.)

Several major efforts at classification have been made, but the best and most extensive has probably been done by various government agencies in the U. S. and abroad—particularly the United States Airforce. As far as analytical results are concerned we have pretty well drawn a goose-egg, unless the deep catacombs of world-wide bureaucracy contain many more answers than have been broadcast to us.

There has been no lack of interest, energy and good intentions in matters of research, but the plain, unpleasant facts are simply that there have not been enough tangible clews in all the accumulated data to support even qualitative findings, never-you-mind trying to be quantitative or definitive. It is this lack of tangible evidence (no meat in the stew, so to speak) which has defeated the ardent followers of Ufology, including government agencies; and has given

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the professional scoffers and dogmaticists their opening to deride the whole subject of Ufology. It now begins to look like this is *one* problem that might not be solved piecemeal.

The one thing which seems undeniable is the qualitative conclusion that there really are Unidentified Flying Objects, including Flying Saucers, and that they have been a part of our world for many thousands of years. But, when we set out to analyze their form and nature, or explain their presence and purpose we run smack into that well known impasse commonly called a stone wall. It is downright frustrating.

If tabulation and categorization were all that was involved we might find it hard to justify the high-sounding appellation: UFOLOGY. However, fortunately (or unfortunately as you prefer to look at it) there is ever so much more to Ufology than just this preliminary step in establishing a basis for research.

Many of us, who are seriously looking for the truth about UFO, believe that the most fundamental difficulty lies in our failure to realize that UFOLOGY embraces the greater part of what is now known as borderland knowledge. Some Ufologists have realized from the beginning that ESP (Extra-Sensory Perception) plays a part; and a few, notably Dr. Meade Layne in California, have insisted from the beginning that materializations from other universes (i.e. from universes of more than three dimensions) may be an intimate part of the whole. Others, both individuals and large groups, have been determined on placing religious, or divine, interpretations of UFO or space phenomena, attributing a high degree of divinity to those whom they term "The Visitors." Still others, especially the Metaphysicists, believing in reincarnation, think that the space visitors are naught but the returning of the "Masters" who passed out of three-dimensional, terrestrial ken many years ago. Some of the Metaphysicists and some cultists even claim to have direct knowledge that Jesus Christ is now resident on Venus and is directing the organized activity of a corps of spacemen who are working to save mankind from his own follies. I have talked to one or two people who claim to have spoken to Christ during their space-jaunts in UFO.

For my part, I recognize the necessity of bearing all of these factors (and more) in mind, but in the five books I have written on Ufology thus far I have attempted to stay as nearly as possible within the recognized framework of Science. I have done this as a matter of expediency, rather than because of any prejudice toward anything in the "borderland" or new frontiers of knowledge. While I am, over the long haul, attempting to present the entire breadth and scope

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of borderland or peripheral knowledge as applied to Ufology, I feel safer in making a progressive approach via conventional paths. I have therefore tried to organize all the pertinent *physical* facts and present them in my first series of books on Ufology. Even in doing this, however, I have found difficulty because of the obvious overlap into the non-material or psychic, and I have had considerable criticism from readers who place great stress on the fields not yet recognized by formal science.

Throughout my presentation, thus far, I have held to a working hypothesis that there have been one or more advanced civilizations prior to our own. I have assumed that the "elder race," whoever they were, developed knowledge, possibly even a "science" based on gravitational laws rather than the presently accepted laws of physics which are largely dependent on electronics and electro-magnetism. While each school would be incomplete (as present-day science obviously is) there is no conflict between the two evolving lines of development, and a long-gone race might have accomplished things through a knowledge of gravitation that seem impossible from the viewpoint of today's "Science."

For instance: In the reporting of Ufo phenomena during the past few years, there has been continuous and repetitive reference to sightings and contacts with "Little People." They have been variously described, many times being seen as clothed in startling suits, and sometimes appearing to be of a green color or to be wearing green clothing. I was startled to find that reputable Ethnologists had shown that Pygmies had existed as fully developed humans from as far back as the Age known to Geologists as the "Tertiary." That's over thirty million (30,000,000) years ago, my friends. Compare this with the conclusions of our ultra-conservative Anthropologists, Geologists and Archaeologists of today who are thrilled by the discovery of humanoid skeletal remains dating back 20,000 to 50,000 years, indicating (to them) stone-age cave-men of no mental development above that of the Australian bushmen.

Our present civilization has, purportedly, gone from savagery to an electronic paradise in 5000-7000 years. There have been 6000 temporal periods of this length since the advent of the Pygmies on Earth, and there is a discontinuity of the evolutionary chain between the Pygmies and their contemporary mammalian associates of 30,000,000 years ago. Pygmy races exist in rather small tribes over a considerable portion of the Earth and there is evidence that they were previously distributed over an even wider area than at present.

Pygmy tribes seldom exceed 4000 in number but they are scattered in a great arc surrounding the Indian Ocean from South Africa via

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India, Melenesia and the great Island Chains into Australia, extending into the Phillippines, Southeastern Asia and perhaps into Japan. They are sometimes said to pre-date even the pre-dravidian races of India and south-central Asia. Pygmies, in fact, constitute one of the major "erratics" of Ethnology and Anthropology, not to mention Archaeology, Paleontology, and Geology. Like poor relations, they are studiously ignored in public. The embarrassing facts of Pygmydom are swept under the Scientific rugs.

Now then—it has been one of my scandalous working hypotheses that sometime in that imponderable thirty million years we can readily think that these Pygmies evolved an intelligent civilization. They have left no traces (found as yet) to indicate that they ever understood electronics or the principles of our modern physics, but there is abundant evidence over the world that Pygmies built much of the megalithic, or massive, stonework such as that of Easter Island, Peru, Baalbek, Ankor Vat, Zimbabwe, The Great Pyramid, etc. There is even some evidence that our present physical stature is a development from small size as recently as during the past few hundred years. Somewhere, they had to get the force and power to move those huge stones which would defy present-day engineers. Where did it come from—if not from a knowledge of contra-gravity? And where did the Pygmy race obtain such knowledge, if they had no cultural background?

The passages in the Great Pyramid are too low for a modern adult person of any but the Pygmy races. The steps and passages of the mysterious Zimbabwe ruins in Southern Rhodesia are too small for fully grown white men or for the present-day African. The Ruins of Sacshuaman, in Peru, contain tunnels and stairs too small and too low for people like us—they were built to accommodate people about 3½ feet high. Yet—those people had very high cultures and did complex and exquisite work in stone. The stones they lifted weighed hundred—in some cases, thousands—of tons. Whence came that culture and whence came the power to lift the stones? And, if they were not built *by* Pygmies and *for* Pygmies—then by and for whom? Surely, the world-wide culture that built those stone edifices was united in some manner, yet the Pygmies of today are a widely scattered conglomerate of tribes. How were these isolated tribes distributed—if not via aerial transport? How else explain their total lack of blending with their surroundings, and the lack of any traces of their migration via land routes?

The Maya of Yucatan and Central America tell us legends of "dwarfs" who preceded their own ancestors in that area. Bones of Pygmies have been found in burial grounds in North America. There

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are legends and traces of them in parts of South America. The Picts and Celts were of small stature but prodigious strength, and they built great stone structures. There are artificial caverns in Europe only large enough for *our children* to play in. The Polynesians have vague memories of a race of small people of great strength who built big stone-structures. H. T. Wilkins has reported on the pygmies of the South Pacific who were said to be survivors of "the great sea that swallowed the land" and who salvaged weapons with which they fought the surviving giants.

Whatever science those ancient little people had, it was concentrated around working in stone and non-metallic substances, so that in its every phase it was different from the science of today. Some anthropologists have attempted to show that the ancient "black" magic was a forerunner of modern science, or rather (perhaps) a remnant of the even more ancient science of the little people of the pre-dawn period.

Wilkins and Dr. Flower, both of England, have called our attention to Japanese reports of pygmies in that land, ages before the yellow-negrite savages from a fabled land of Pan invaded and conquered the aboriginal Ainu. The Ainu reported that the "little people" were about 4½ feet tall and had tails.

The Mincopes, a well developed Pygmy race in the Malay Archipelago, believe in a god whom they call Peluga, who is said to live in the sky, in a stone house and with a *green wife*. Does this tie in with our present-day stories of little people, sometimes said to be green, landing from space craft?

One Pygmy tribe in the far east points to a great, ancient and weathered stone which is covered with aging hieroglyphs of some kind and tells us that this is the history of the world, and yet—this tribe has not the faintest conception of writing nor what writing could be used for. This is clearly a racial memory of a time when they *did* have culture and writing.

We cannot discount entirely these stories. Who, for instance, could seriously doubt the veracity of Dorothy Kilgallen's account in May 1955, of a space craft full of little people which crashed in England and was captured by British officials? What of the many stories of little people seen in France, Italy, Venezuela, Ohio, California, Mexico and other places? Are these to be laughed off? And if not, then is it not simpler to assume that this race invented space flight in the millions of years before our own "wave" of civilization than to think that they are coming from the remote reaches of space?

As I have said, the passages and chambers of the Great Pyramid point a steady finger toward construction and use by little people. But—how many of us know that some of the deepest and most esoteric astronomy is built into that

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massive structure? Almost all of the physical and mathematical quantities relating to the Earth, as an astronomical body and a part of the Solar System, are built into the Pyramid. The lengths of the Sidereal Year and Solar Year are indicated in the circumferential base line of the Pyramid. The diagonals indicate the length of the precessional cycle. The hollowed-in sides indicate the eccentricity of the Earth's orbit. The relations of the square and the circle, and the quantity pi, are indicated perfectly. The Pyramid is on the 30th parallel, at the geometrical center of the land area of the Earth. The basic unit of pyramid measure is the primitive, or pyramid, inch, equal to one 500,000,000th part of the arc from the Equator to the pole, and other measurements bear relationships to the distance of the Earth from the sun. Yet, this monument to ancient science was made by little people and not by Egyptians within the period of recorded history. Davidson, making a life-long study of the Pyramid considered it proven that the earlier civilization who built it knew much more about gravity and gravitational astronomy than we of today. Who were those little people who knew so much, and where did they come from and where have they gone?

Not the least puzzling of the remains from those pre-historic races are the huge neatly cut stones making up the great forts and other structures. In a great many cases, from Mexico to Ankor, to Zimbabwe, to Egypt to Sacshwaman, the stones were moved long distances from quarry to building site. Both Peru and Zimbabwe are outstanding examples. There were no roads leading to Zimbabwe—so where did the granite come from, and *how was it brought there* if not via air? And by what mechanical means if not aeroforms or space ships? How was $300,000,000 worth of Gold removed from Zimbabwe, unless by air? There were no burial grounds at Zimbabwe—where and how were the dead taken away? What caused the dropping of tools and instantaneous departures from Zimbabwe, Easter Island, Peru and places in the South Seas and Asia? What catastrophe?

Can we assume that these many isolated colonies of little people had a common base somewhere in space—on the Moon perhaps? If so then each had its own lines of communication with the home base, off-shore the Earth, and there was little or no need for intercommunication between the terrestrial colonies. All travel must have been by aeroform, and aeroforms seem to have handled the megaliths for the great structures.

The Pygmy religions postulate a god in the sky. He resembles fire, but is invisible. He was never born, but is immortal (*Melchisedek*, Hebrews 7:3). He created the world and all good things. He eats and drinks and lives in a great stone mansion in the sky. He descends

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to Earth in clouds to gather food and hurls blazing fagots from clouds when angry. For a primitive people, this is not too bad a description of space people and spaceships.

The Pygmies are an aloof lot of people. They have a positive mania against strangers, even their neighbors in the jungles. They seem to resent living in the open and the whole race seems to have some of the elements of being "stir crazy." They act like a race which had been confined in solitude for too long a time. How did they get that way —by prolonged life in spaceships, perhaps? Is this another racial memory? In any case they seem pathologically conditioned to isolation.

Today, almost all of the Pygmy races inhabit the areas bordering on the Indian Ocean, a vast region where almost all flora and fauna are different from those in the Western Hemisphere. There is evidence in North, Central and South America to show that all major types of life were eliminated long ago by a cosmic collision which seems to have struck in the middle between North and South America. This was certainly some thousands of years ago, about the time that we ascribe to the beginning of our own written history. The ancient wave of civilization survived only in the areas surrounding the Indian Ocean, simply because that was the antipodes opposite the disaster. The Pygmies, once world-wide, survived there. What was the extent of their culture before the catastrophe—or "flood"?

There is much more to be said about Anthropology's contribution to Ufology but it is too long a story for this short discussion. Let's look at some other contributions.

Selenology—the science of the Moon—offers some of the best evidence. Ever since the invention of the telescope there have been queer things seen happening on the Moon. Craters appear and sometimes disappear, and they change shape. Walls of huge size are moved or distorted. Lights appear on the dark portion of the Moon and sometimes move about. A bridge twelve miles long and miles high was discovered a few years ago in a place which had been intensively mapped and studied for generations. Something resembling a road or other structure of great brightness suddenly appeared three or four years ago in the crater Piccolomini. In the incredible decade, 1877-1886 Flammarion saw such a thing apparently stretched across the top of a crater twenty-five or thirty miles in diameter. Clouds form on the Moon and move over the surface, yet—the Moon has no atmosphere. Why? *Something* grows, spreads and decays in certain spots on the Moon during the short, exceedingly hot, lunar day. A cloud of varying size and distinctness covers the site of the crater Linné which disappeared about 1865. One

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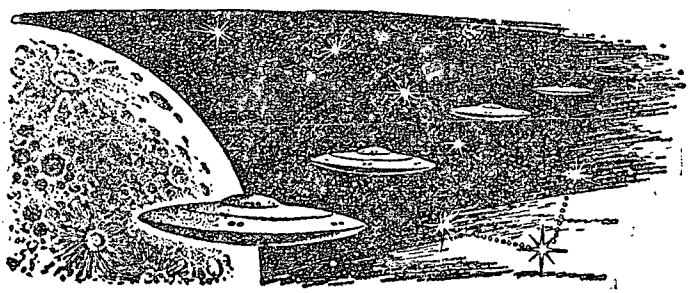
area looks like the furrows of a great strip-mine. Lighted areas exist in some of the larger craters, and the lights seem to be in geometric patterns and to move occasionally. Some of the cloudlike nebulocities on the moon, which come and go, are impossible to focus sharply with a telescope—what *are* they? In 1865 there was one dome-like object, a white thing like a small inverted bowl, which apparently had settled down over the crater Linné. Such a thing was too prominent to have been missed by careful selenographers. Maybe we wouldn't mind so much about that *one,* but their number has now increased to well over 200, and the number seems to be doubling about once every twenty years. What are these things? Do they represent a colonizing scheme of some kind? Are they landing places or hangers? *Who has beaten us to the moon?*

But these are only a few of the facets of our frontier-knowledge which seem to bear on Ufology. What of methods of communication which have to do with infra-red light beams, radio frequencies, etc.? And much more exciting, what of the constant stream of reports that we get about telepathic communication to and from space people? How do the space phenomena tie in with spirits, poltergeists, ESP? How do the saucers manage to appear and disappear instantly—does this involve transition to and from a fourth dimension of some kind?

What of the endless accounts of extraterrestrial intervention recorded solemnly and factually in the Holy Bible? These records cover thousands of years and clearly point to constant visitation and supervision from space. Contacts, talks with space people and rides in space craft were commonplace in those days.

All-in-all, the sphere of Ufology seems to encompass the entirety of our environment, with special reference to those phases of which we are only now becoming aware. This makes for complexity, and I do not believe that the real enlightenment can come from merely counting and tabulating sightings of Flying Saucers.



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the lovely house

by . . . Michael Shaara

It was almost breath-taking in its odd perfection, high on the hillside — a strange and beckoning perfection. . . .

THERE was a very light fog and the air was still. We had just turned north on the road toward Dover when Eileen saw the house.

"Oh!" she cried, "what a *lovely* house!"

I looked. Eileen can never drive for very long without seeing what she calls a "lovely" house, but I had grown used to it then and I looked. I was surprised.

It really was a lovely house.

It was very odd. I looked up and saw it perched in the mist on the side of a hill, dark and quiet and lonely. Even in the mist, even in the damp cold of the afternoon, it was still obviously a beautiful house.

"Let's go up," Eileen said excitedly, "let's go see it."

"All right," I said, wondering at myself.

We drove up a wet, rocky road. When we had gone a little way we found that the house was not near the road at all, but back quite a way beyond some trees. It was standing alone in a plain grassy field, with no roadway or path leading up to it. Still, although it was a long wet walk from the road and I am not the man for this sort of thing, we got out of the car and walked up to see it.

Michael Shaara, who'll be remembered for his DEATH OF A HUNTER *(October 1957) and for his earlier* CONQUEST OVER TIME *(November 1956), returns with this short-short suggesting one method by which the alleged extra-terrestrials in our midst may be gathering the samples they're here for.*

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"Well now," Eileen said with finality, smiling, "this-is-it!" As I looked at the dark building, I caught the same feeling, I went very suddenly all warm and soft inside, I could understand what she meant. There was a something about this house which flowed out and enveloped us—a peculiar, soothing, dreamy something which I could not understand. For a moment I stared at the house, stared hard, trying to see what it was about the house that was so unusual. But there was nothing. It was just walls and windows and roof. It was just a house.

"Isn't it beautiful?" Eileen was saying. "Isn't it what we've always wanted?"

"Sure is nice," I said. "First house I ever saw look nice in a fog, without any lights on. Funny."

"Beautiful," Eileen murmured.

I looked at her. She was staring at the house gravely, dreamily. Abruptly she started to walk forward and I caught her arm.

"Where are you going?"

"I . . . I," she finally turned her eyes toward me, "I was going to look into the windows."

Her face was bright red and flushed, happy, but somehow also remarkably calm. I had never seen her look this way before and I misunderstood. I made up my mind.

"Listen dear," I said quickly, "would you like to buy this house? Would you like to live here?"

Now that her eyes were away from the house they seemed to clear suddenly and she jumped with delight.

"Oh, can we, darling, can we? I'd love to!"

"All right. Let's drive into Dover and see the real estate man. Doesn't look like there's anybody living here, what with no path or road—maybe it's for sale. Or if it isn't, we can get the plans and build one ourselves. All right?"

She nodded, looking back.

"Couldn't I stay here," she said, "while *you* go?"

I stared at her. She finally came.

The fog seemed to be getting thicker and it was very cold.

The real estate man in Dover was a dry little man named Carson whom I have known for some time. I expected that he would know all about the new house out on the hill and by this time I had become very curious. But Carson could tell me nothing.

Because Carson said that there wasn't any house there.

At first I thought he'd misunderstood my description. I gave it to him again.

"Yes, yes," he said impatiently, "I know the road you mean. Little rocky road runs up the side of Van Vleck hill. Man, there's no house on that hill. Never was. I was up there just the other day . . ."

For the first time now I began to feel that there was something very peculiar. I knew Carson and he knew me. There was no reason for jokes. But Carson refused to

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admit there could be a house on that hill.

"Look," I said, "I saw that house. Not ten minutes ago I saw it. If you don't believe it come on up and take a look. Somebody must have built without you knowing it."

"But there ain't no . . ."

"I *saw* it, darn it. Come on." It was suddenly very important to me that he came.

He stared at me for a moment, then grinned slightly.

"All right," he said amiably, "but I think you should know that that's my property. Ain't nobody building a house on my property 'thout my knowin'."

A few moments later we turned in the dirt road, looked up the hill.

The house was still there.

Carson was speechless. He got out of the car and began running through the trees and onto the field. Eileen followed him.

Then I saw that there were people standing around the house. For a short, stabbing moment I was afraid. But I saw a number of cars parked by the road and I realized that other people passing by, seeing the house, had also stopped. I began to walk up the hill feeling very strange and uncomfortable.

The people by the house were all young couples. They were standing arm in arm, heads against shoulders, gazing admiringly and dreamily at the house. Just as Eileen had done. It was all quite weird until I looked at the house and caught the same feeling. Even the real estate man was saying what a beautiful house it was.

"Oh, darling," Eileen breathed, coming to me with a tenderness I haven't seen in years, "isn't it a beautiful house?"

I swore to myself. Either they were all crazy or I was. But vaguely, weakly, I could feel a faint sucking pull coming at me from the house, and I guessed that these people were all feeling the same thing, only much stronger. I did not know why it did not affect me, maybe I am very stubborn, but I began to be very much afraid.

Eileen left me then and tried to look in the windows, which were all glazed and opaque. All about me the other couples were passing, silent and gazing.

It was then that I saw that this dark thing before me was not really a house.

For a stark, flashing moment, as my fears increased, the lines of the house shimmered and floated away, and I saw through the illusion to the black mass beyond.

And then the house came back. And the door opened.

It swung open quickly, silently. In the dark hall, vaguely, against a far panel of rich red oak, a crimsoned picture hung upon the wall. It was enormously beautiful. From nearby I heard a gasp of delight as Eileen started forward. But a very young couple was nearer.

Drawn by the pull of the lovely house, they ran up the steps and

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through the door, laughing delightedly. The door closed upon them with a sharp metallic click.

For an endless second we hung in the stillness, on the edge of the fog, while the house shivered quickly and dissolved in the mist. Where the house had been a squat thing sat, round and black and ugly.

The unnameable thing had accomplished its mission; it had cleverly collected its specimens. With a blast of great flame from beneath its sides, rising on a shaft of bright orange fire, the trap, the *ship*, blasted straight up into the sky.

INTRODUCTION TO OUTER SPACE

WARNING THAT THE REPORT was "not science fiction" but rather "a sober realistic presentation prepared by leading scientists" of the "adventures which lie ahead," President Eisenhower announced, as we went to press, the report, INTRODUCTION TO OUTER SPACE, prepared by his Science Advisory Committee. Commenting on the factors which give "importance, urgency and inevitability to the advancement of space technology," the committee (which is headed by Dr. James R. Killian, Jr., and includes scientists like Nobel laureate Dr. Isidor I. Rabi, Dr. Lloyd V. Berkner, and Dr. Detlev V. Bronk) discussed the basic laws governing satellites and space flight, the terms in which the ultimate value of launching satellites and sending rockets into space must be measured, and "important, foreseeable, military uses for space vehicles." While that morning's newspapers, understandably, fastened on one feature of the report—"2 BILLION COST SET FOR TRIP TO MOON" (*N. Y. Times*, March 27, 1958), the report went on to take up a number of points which have long interested science fiction readers.

Is there life on the Moon? The report stated: "While the Moon is believed to be devoid of life, even the simplest and most primitive, this cannot be taken for granted. Some scientists have suggested that small particles with the properties of life—germs or spores—could exist in space and could have drifted on to the Moon."

Is there life on Mars? "The nearest planets to earth are Mars and Venus. We know quite enough about Mars to suspect that it may support some form of life. To land instrument carriers on Mars and Venus will be easier, in one respect, than achieving a 'soft' landing on the Moon. The reason is that both planets have atmospheres that can be used to cushion the final approach. These atmospheres might also be used to support balloons equipped to carry out both meteorological soundings and a general photo survey of surface features. The Venusian atmosphere, of course, consists of what appears to be a dense layer of clouds so that its surface has never been seen at all from earth."

Will Man go out to the Stars? The Committee felt it would be foolish to predict today when this moment would arrive. Much would depend on our progress, but come this would. In the meantime we needed to be "cautious and modest in our predictions and pronouncements about future space activities—and quietly bold in our execution."

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road to nightfall

by . . . Robert Silverberg

They surrounded him like hungry dogs, eyes gleaming as they waited for a sign of fear or even weakness.

THE dog snarled, and ran on. Katterson watched the two lean, fiery-eyed men speeding in pursuit, while a mounting horror grew in him and rooted him to the spot. The dog suddenly bounded over a heap of rubble and was gone; its pursuers sank limply down, leaning on their clubs, and tried to catch their breath.

"It's going to get much worse than this," said a small, grubby-looking man who appeared from nowhere next to Katterson. "I've heard the official announcement's coming today, but the rumor's been around for a long time."

"So they say," answered Katterson slowly. The chase he had just witnessed still held him paralyzed. "We're all pretty hungry."

The two men who had chased the dog got up, still winded, and wandered off. Katterson and the little man watched their slow retreat.

"That's the first time I've ever seen people doing that," said Katterson. "Out in the open like that—"

"It won't be the last time," said the grubby man. "Better get used to it, now that the food's gone."

Here is a rather shocking description of what can happen in a shattered New York in the 21st century, isolated from the rest of the country, its food gone, standards vanishing as hunger becomes the only reality. Silverberg is the author of 13th IMMORTAL *and* MASTER OF LIFE AND DEATH *(both Ace).*

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Katterson's stomach twinged. It was empty, and would stay that way till the evening's food dole. Without the doles, he would have no idea of where his next bite of food would come from. He and the small man walked on through the quiet street, stepping over the rubble, walking aimlessly with no particular goal in mind.

"My name's Paul Katterson," he said finally. "I live on 47th Street. I was discharged from the Army last year."

"Oh, one of those," said the little man. They turned down 15th Street. It was a street of complete desolation; not one pre-war house was standing, and a few shabby tents were pitched at the far end of the street. "Have you had any work since your discharge?"

Katterson laughed. "Good joke. Try another."

"I know. Things are tough. My name is Malory; I'm a merchandiser."

"What do you merchandise?"

"Oh . . . useful products."

Katterson nodded. Obviously Malory didn't want him to pursue the topic, and he dropped it. They walked on silently, the big man and the little one, and Katterson could think of nothing but the emptiness in his stomach. Then his thoughts drifted to the scene of a few minutes before, the two hungry men chasing a dog. Had it come to that so soon, Katterson asked himself? What was going to happen, he wondered, as food became scarcer and scarcer and finally there was none at all.

But the little man was pointing ahead. "Look," he said. "Meeting at Union Square."

Katterson squinted and saw a crowd starting to form around the platform reserved for public announcements. He quickened his pace, forcing Malory to struggle to keep up with him.

A young man in military uniform had mounted the platform and was impassively facing the crowd. Katterson looked at the jeep nearby, automatically noting it was the 2036 model, the most recent one, eighteen years old. After a minute or so the soldier raised his hand for silence, and spoke in a quiet, restrained voice.

"Fellow New Yorkers, I have an official announcement from the Government. Word has just been received from Trenton Oasis—"

The crowd began to murmur. They seemed to know what was coming.

"Word has just been received from Trenton Oasis that, due to recent emergency conditions there, all food supplies for New York City and environs will be temporarily cut off. Repeat: due to recent emergency in the Trenton Oasis, all food supplies for New York and environs will temporarily be cut off."

The murmuring in the crowd grew to an angry, biting whisper as each man discussed this latest turn of events with the man next

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to him. This was hardly unexpected news; Trenton had long protested the burden of feeding helpless, bombed-out New York, and the recent flood there had given them ample opportunity to squirm out of their responsibility. Katterson stood silent, towering over the people around him, finding himself unable to believe what he was hearing. He seemed aloof, almost detached, obectively criticizing the posture of the soldier on the platform, counting his insignia, thinking of everything but the implications of the announcement, and trying to fight back the growing hunger.

The uniformed man was speaking again. "I also have this message from the Governor of New York, General Holloway: he says that attempts at restoring New York's food supply are being made, and that messengers have been despatched to the Baltimore Oasis to request food supplies. In the meantime the Government food doles are to be discontinued effective tonight, until further notice. That is all."

The soldier gingerly dismounted from the platform and made his way through the crowd to his jeep. He climbed quickly in and drove off. Obviously he was an important man, Katterson decided, because jeeps and fuel were scarce items, not used lightly by anyone and everyone.

Katterson remained where he was and turned his head slowly, looking at the people around him—thin, half-starved little skeletons, most of them, who secretly begrudged him his giant frame. An emaciated man with burning eyes and a beak of a nose had gathered a small group around himself and was shouting some sort of harangue. Katterson knew of him—his name was Emerich, and he was the leader of the colony living in the abandoned subway at 14th Street. Katterson instinctively moved closer to hear him, and Malory followed.

"It's all a plot!" the emaciated man was shouting. "They talk of an emergency in Trenton. What emergency? I ask you, what emergency? That flood didn't hurt them. They just want to get us off their necks by starving us out, that's all! And what can we do about it? Nothing. Trenton knows we'll never be able to rebuild New York, and they want to get rid of us, so they cut off our food."

By now the crowd had gathered round him. Emerich was popular; people were shouting their agreement, punctuating his speech with applause.

"But will we starve to death? We will not!"

"That's right, Emerich!" yelled a burly man with a beard.

"No," Emerich continued, "we'll show them what we can do. We'll scrape up every bit of food we can find, every blade of grass, every wild animal, every bit of shoeleather. And we'll survive, just the way we survived the blockade and

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the famine of '47 and everything else. And one of these days we'll go out to Trenton and—and—roast them alive!"

Roars of approval filled the air. Katterson turned and shouldered his way through the crowd, thinking of the two men and the dog, and walked away without looking back. He headed down Fourth Avenue, until he could no longer hear the sounds of the meeting at Union Square, and sat down wearily on a pile of crushed girders that had once been the Carden Monument.

He put his head in his big hands and sat there. The afternoon's events had numbed him. Food had been scarce as far back as he could remember—the twenty-four years of war with the Spherists had just about used up every resource of the country. The war had dragged on and on. After the first rash of preliminary bombings, it had become a war of attrition, slowly grinding the opposing spheres to rubble.

Somehow Katterson had grown big and powerful on hardly any food, and he stood out wherever he went. The generation of Americans to which he belonged was not one of size or strength—the children were born undernourished old men, weak and wrinkled. But he had been big, and he had been one of the lucky ones chosen for the Army. At least there he had been fed regularly.

Katterson kicked away a twisted bit of slag, and saw little Malory coming down Fourth Avenue in his direction. Katterson laughed to himself, remembering his Army days. His whole adult life had been spent in a uniform, with soldier's privileges. But it had been too good to last; two years before, in 2052, the war had finally dragged to a complete standstill, with the competing hemispheres both worn to shreds, and almost the entire Army had suddenly been mustered out into the cold civilian world. He had been dumped into New York, lost and alone.

"Let's go for a dog-hunt," Malory said, smiling, as he drew near.

"Watch your tongue, little man. I might just eat you if I get hungry enough."

"Eh? I thought you were so shocked by two men trying to catch a dog."

Katterson looked up. "I was," he said. "Sit down, or get moving, but don't play games," he growled. Malory flung himself down on the wreckage near Katterson and tried to straighten his tangled, thinning hair.

"Looks pretty bad," Malory said.

"Check," said Katterson. "I haven't eaten anything all day."

"Why not? There was a regular dole last night, and there'll be one tonight."

"You hope," said Katterson. The day was drawing to a close, he saw, and evening shadows were falling fast. Ruined New York looked weird in twilight; the gnarled

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girders and fallen buildings seemed ghosts of long-dead giants.

"You'll be even hungrier tomorrow," Malory said. "There isn't going to be any dole, any more."

"Don't remind me, little man."

"I'm in the food-supplying business, myself," said Malory, as a weak smile rippled over his lips.

Katterson picked up his head in a hurry.

"Playing games again?"

"No," Malory said hastily. He scribbled his address on a piece of paper and handed it to Katterson. "Here. Drop in on me any time you get really hungry. And—say, you're a pretty strong fellow, aren't you? I might even have some work for you, since you say you're unattached."

The shadow of an idea began to strike Katterson. He turned so he faced the little man, and stared at him.

"What kind of work?"

Malory paled. "Oh, I need some strong men to obtain food for me. *You* know," he whispered.

Katterson reached over and grasped the small man's thin shoulders. Malory winced. "Yes, I know," Katterson repeated slowly. "Tell me, Malory," he said carefully. "What sort of food do you sell?"

Malory squirmed. "Why—why—now look, I just wanted to help you, and—"

"Don't give me any of that." Slowly Katterson stood up, not releasing his grip on the small man. Malory found himself being dragged willy-nilly to his feet. "You're in the meat business, aren't you, Malory? *What kind of meat do you sell?*"

Malory tried to break away. Katterson shoved him with a contemptuous half-open fist and sent him sprawling back into the rubble-heap. Malory twisted away, his eyes wild with fear, and dashed off down 13th Street into the gloom. Katterson stood for a long time watching him retreat, breathing hard and not daring to think. Then he folded the paper with Malory's address on it and put it in his pocket, and walked numbly away.

Barbara was waiting for him when he pressed his thumb against the doorplate of his apartment on 47th Street, an hour later.

"I suppose you've heard the news," she said as he entered. "Some spic-and-span lieutenant came by and announced it down below. I've already picked up our dole for tonight, and that's the last one. Hey—anything the matter?" She looked at him anxiously as he sank wordlessly into a chair.

"Nothing, kid. I'm just hungry—and a little sick to my stomach."

"Where'd you go today? The Square again?"

"Yeah. My usual Thursday afternoon stroll, and a pleasant picnic that turned out to be. First I saw two men hunting a dog—they couldn't have been much hungrier

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than I am, but they were chasing this poor scrawny thing. Then your lieutenant made his announcement about the food. And then a filthy meat peddler tried to sell me some 'merchandise' and give me a job."

The girl caught her breath. "A job? Meat? What happened? Oh, Paul—"

"Stow it," Katterson told her. "I knocked him sprawling and he ran away with his tail between his legs. You know what he was selling? You know what kind of meat he wanted me to eat?"

She lowered her eyes. "Yes, Paul."

"And the job he had for me—he saw I'm strong, so he would have made me his supplier. I would have gone out hunting in the evenings. Looking for stragglers to be knocked off and turned into tomorrow's steaks."

"But we're so hungry, Paul—when you're hungry that's the most important thing."

"What?" His voice was the bellow of an outraged bull. "What? You don't know what you're saying, woman. Eat before you go out of your mind completely. I'll find some other way of getting food, but I'm not going to turn into a bloody cannibal. No longpork for Paul Katterson."

She said nothing. The single light-glow in the ceiling flickered twice.

"Getting near shut-off time. Get the candles out, unless you're sleepy," he said. He had no chronometer, but the flickering was the signal that eight-thirty was approaching. At eight-thirty every night electricity was cut off in all residence apartments except those with permission to exceed normal quota.

Barbara lit a candle.

"Paul, Father Kennen was back here again today."

"I've told him not to show up here again," Katterson said from the darkness of his corner of the room.

"He thinks we ought to get married, Paul."

"I know. I don't."

"Paul, why are you—"

"Let's not go over that again. I've told you often enough that I don't want the responsibility of two mouths to feed, when I can't even manage keeping my own belly full. This way is the best—each of us our own."

"But children, Paul—"

"Are you crazy tonight?" he retorted. "Would you dare to bring a child into this world? Especially now that we've even lost the food from Trenton Oasis. Would you enjoy watching him slowly starve to death in all this filth and rubble, or maybe growing up into a hollow-cheeked little skeleton? Maybe you would. I don't think I'd care to."

He was silent. She sat watching him, sobbing quietly.

"We're dead, you and I," she finally said. "We won't admit it, but we're dead. This whole world is dead—we've spent the last thirty

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years committing suicide. I don't remember as far back as you do, but I've read some of the old books, about how clean and new and shiny this city was before the war. The war! All my life, we've been at war, never knowing who we were fighting or why. Just eating the world apart for no reason at all."

"Cut it, Barbara," Katterson said. But she went on in a dead monotone. "They tell me America once went from coast to coast, instead of being cut up into little strips bordered by radioactive no-man's-land. And there were farms, and food, and lakes and rivers, and men flew from place to place. Why did this have to happen? Why are we all dead? Where do we go now, Paul?"

"I don't know, Barbara. I don't think anyone does." Wearily, he snuffed out the candle, and the darkness flooded in and filled the room.

Somehow he had wandered back down to Union Square again, and he stood on 14th Street, rocking gently back and forth on his feet and feeling the light-headedness which is the first sign of starvation. There were just a few people in the streets, morosely heading for whatever destinations claimed them. The sun was high overhead, and bright.

His reverie was interrupted by the sound of yells and an unaccustomed noise of running feet. His Army training stood him in good fashion, as he dove into a gaping trench and hid there, wondering what was happening.

After a moment he peeked out. Four men, each as big as Katterson himself, were roaming up and down the now deserted streets. One was carrying a sack.

"There's one," Katterson heard the man with the sack yell harshly. He watched without believing as the four men located a girl cowering near a fallen building.

She was a pale, thin, ragged-looking girl, perhaps twenty at the most, who might have been pretty in some other world. But her cheeks were sunken and coarse, her eyes dull and glassy, her arms bony and angular.

As they drew near she huddled back, cursing defiantly, and prepared to defend herself. *She doesn't understand,* Katterson thought. *She thinks she's going to be attacked.*

Perspiration streamed down his body, and he forced himself to watch, kept himself from leaping out of hiding. The four marauders closed in on the girl. She spat, struck out with her clawlike hand.

They chuckled and grabbed her clutching arm. Her scream was suddenly ear-piercing as they dragged her out into the open. A knife flashed; Katterson ground his teeth together, wincing, as the blade struck home.

"In the sack with her, Charlie," a rough voice said.

Katterson's eyes steamed with rage. It was his first view of Malory's butchers—at least, he sus-

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pected it was Malory's gang. Feeling the knife at his side, in its familiar sheath, he half-rose to attack the four meat-raiders, and then, regaining his senses, he sank back into the trench.

So soon? Katterson knew that cannibalism had been spreading slowly through starving New York for many years, and that few bodies of the dead ever reached their graves intact—but this was the first time, so far as he knew, that raiders had dragged a man living from the streets and killed him for food. He shuddered. The race for life was on, then.

The four raiders disappeared in the direction of Third Avenue, and Katterson cautiously eased himself from the trench, cast a wary eye in all directions, and edged into the open. He knew he would have to be careful; a man his size carried meat for many mouths.

Other people were coming out of the buildings now, all with much the same expression of horror on their faces. Katterson watched the marching skeletons walking dazedly, a few sobbing, most of them past the stage of tears. He clenched and unclenched his fists, angry, burning to stamp out this spreading sickness and knowing hopelessly that it could not be done.

A tall, thin man with chiseled features was on the speaker's platform now. His voice was choked with anger.

"Brothers, it's out in the open now. Men have turned from the ways of God, and Satan has led them to destruction. Just now you witnessed four of His creatures destroy a fellow mortal for food—the most terrible sin of all.

"Brothers, our time on Earth is almost done. I'm an old man—I remember the days before the war, and, while some of you won't believe it, I remember the days when there was food for all, when everyone had a job, when these crumpled buildings were tall and shiny and streamlined, and the skies teemed with jets. In my youth I traveled all across this country, clear to the Pacific. But the War has ended all that, and it's God's hand upon us. Our day is done, and soon we'll all meet our reckoning.

"Go to God without blood on your hands, brothers. Those four men you saw today will burn forever for their crime. Whoever eats the unholy meat they butchered today will join them in Hell. But listen a moment, brothers, listen! Those of you who aren't lost yet, I beg of you: save yourselves! Better to go without food at all, as most of you are doing, than to soil yourselves with this kind of new food, the most precious meat of all."

Katterson stared at the people around him. He wanted to end all this; he had a vision of a crusade for food, a campaign against cannibalism, banners waving, drums beating, himself leading the fight. Some of the people had stopped listening to the old preacher, and

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some had wandered off. A few were smiling and hurling derisive remarks at the old man, but he ignored them.

"Hear me! Hear me, before you go. We're all doomed anyway; the Lord has made that clear. But think, people—this world will shortly pass away, and there is the greater world to come. Don't sign away your chance for eternal life, brothers! Don't trade your immortal soul for a bite of tainted meat!"

The crowd was melting away, Katterson noted. It was dispersing hastily, people quickly edging away and disappearing. The preacher continued talking. Katterson stood on tip-toes and craned his neck past the crowd and stared down towards the east. His eyes searched for a moment, and then he paled. Four ominous figures were coming with deliberate tread down the deserted street.

Almost everyone had seen them now. They were walking four abreast down the center of the street, the tallest holding an empty sack. People were heading hastily in all directions, and as the four figures came to the corner of 14th Street and Fourth Avenue only Katterson and the preacher still stood at the platform.

"I see you're the only one left, young man. Have you defiled yourself, or are you still of the Kingdom of Heaven?"

Katterson ignored the question. "Old man, get down from there!" he snapped. "The raiders are coming back. Come on, let's get out of here before they come."

"No. I intend to talk to them when they come. But save yourself, young man, save yourself while you can."

"They'll kill you, you old fool," Katterson whispered harshly.

"We're all doomed anyway, son. If my day has come, I'm ready."

"You're crazy," Katterson said. The four men were within speaking distance now. Katterson looked at the old man for one last time and then dashed across the street and into a building. He glanced back and saw he was not being followed.

The four raiders were standing under the platform, listening to the old man. Katterson couldn't hear what the preacher was saying, but he was waving his arms as he spoke. They seemed to be listening intently. Katterson stared. He saw one of the raiders say something to the old man, and then the tall one with the sack climbed up on the platform. One of the others tossed him an unsheathed knife.

The shriek was loud and piercing. When Katterson dared to look out again, the tall man was stuffing the preacher's body into the sack. Katterson bowed his head. The trumpets began to fade; he realized that resistance was impossible. Unstoppable currents were flowing.

Katterson plodded uptown to his apartment. The blocks flew past, as he methodically pulled one foot

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after another, walking the two miles through the rubble and deserted, ruined buildings. He kept one hand on his knife and darted glances from right to left, noting the furtive scurryings in the side streets, the shadowy people who were not quite visible behind the ashes and the rubble. Those four figures, one with the sack, seemed to lurk behind every lamppost, waiting hungrily.

He cut into Broadway, taking a shortcut through the stump of the Parker Building. Fifty years before, the Parker Building had been the tallest in the Western world; its truncated stump was all that remained. Katterson passed what had once been the most majestic lobby in the world, and stared in. A small boy sat on the step outside, gnawing a piece of meat. He was eight, or ten; his stomach was drawn tight over his ribs, which showed through like a basket. Choking down his revulsion, Katterson wondered what sort of meat the boy was eating.

He continued on. As he passed 44th Street, a bony cat skittered past him and disappeared behind a pile of ashes. Katterson thought of the stories he had heard of the Great Plains, where giant cats were said to roam unmolested, and his mouth watered.

The sun was sinking low again, and New York was turning dull gray and black. The sun never really shone in late afternoon any more; it sneaked its way through the piles of rubble and cast a ghostly glow on the ruins of New York. Katterson crossed 47th Street and turned down towards his building.

He made the long climb to his room—the elevator's shaft was still there, and the frozen elevator, but such luxuries were beyond dream—and stood outside for just a moment, searching in the darkness for the doorplate. There was the sound of laughter from within, a strange sound for ears not accustomed to it, and a food-smell crept out through the door and hit him squarely. His throat began to work convulsively, and he remembered the dull ball of pain that was his stomach.

Katterson opened the door. The food-odor filled the little room completely. He saw Barbara look up suddenly, white-faced, as he entered. In his chair was a man he had met once or twice, a scraggly-haired, heavily-bearded man named Heydahl.

"What's going on?" Katterson demanded.

Barbara's voice was strangely hushed. "Paul, you know Olaf Heydahl, don't you? Olaf, Paul?"

"What's going on?" Katterson repeated.

"Barbara and I have just been having a little meal, Mr. Katterson," Heydahl said, in a rich voice. "We thought you'd be hungry, so we saved a little for you."

The smell was overpowering, and Katterson felt it was all he could do to keep from foaming at the

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lips. Barbara was wiping her face over and over again with the napkin; Heydahl sat contentedly in Katterson's chair.

In three quick steps Katterson crossed to the other side of the room and threw open the doors to the little enclosed kitchenette. On the stove a small piece of meat sizzled softly. Katterson looked at the meat, then at Barbara.

"Where did you get this?" he asked. "We have no money."

"I—I—"

"I brought it," Heydahl said quietly. "Barbara told me how little food you had, and since I had more than I wanted I brought over a little gift."

"I see. A gift. No strings attached?"

"Why, Mr. Katterson! Remember I'm Barbara's guest."

"Yes, but please remember this is my apartment, not hers. Tell me, Heydahl—what kind of payment do you expect for this—this gift? And how much payment have you had already?"

Heydahl half-rose in his chair. "Please, Paul," Barbara said hurriedly. "No trouble, Paul. Olaf was just trying to be friendly."

"Barbara's right, Mr. Katterson," Heydahl said, subsiding. "Go ahead, help yourself. You'll do yourself some good, and you'll make me happy too."

Katterson stared at him for a moment. The half-light from below trickled in over Heydahl's shoulder, illuminating his nearly-bald head and his flowing beard. Katterson wondered just how Heydahl's cheeks managed to be quite so plump.

"Go ahead," Heydahl repeated. "We've had our fill."

Katterson turned back to the meat. He pulled a plate from the shelf and plopped the piece of meat on it, and unsheathed his knife. He was about to start carving when he turned to look at the two others.

Barbara was leaning forward in her chair. Her eyes were staring wide, and fear was shining deep in them. Heydahl, on the other hand, sat back comfortably in Katterson's chair, with a complacent look on his face that Katterson had not seen on anyone's features since leaving the Army.

A thought hit him suddenly and turned him icy-cold. "Barbara," he said, controlling his voice, "what kind of meat is this? Roast beef or lamb?"

"I don't know, Paul," she said uncertainly. "Olaf didn't say what—"

"Maybe roast dog, perhaps? Filet of alleycat? Why didn't you ask Olaf what was on the menu. *Why don't you ask him now?*"

Barbara looked at Heydahl, then back at Katterson.

"Eat it Paul. It's good, believe me—and I know how hungry you are."

"I don't eat unlabeled goods, Barbara. Ask Mr. Heydahl what kind of meat it is, first."

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She turned to Heydahl. "Olaf—"

"I don't think you should be so fussy these days, Mr. Katterson," Heydahl said. "After all, there are no more food doles, and you don't know when meat will be available again."

"I like to be fussy, Heydahl. What kind of meat is this?"

"Why are you so curious? You know what they say about looking gift-horses in the mouth, heh heh."

"I can't even be sure this is horse, Heydahl. What kind of meat is it?" Katterson's voice, usually carefully modulated, became a snarl. "A choice slice of fat little boy? Maybe a steak from some poor devil who was in the wrong neighborhood one evening?"

Heydahl turned white.

Katterson took the meat from the plate and hefted it for a moment in his hand. "You can't even spit the words out, either of you. They choke in your mouths. Here—cannibals!"

He hurled the meat hard at Barbara; it glanced off the side of her cheek and fell to the floor. His face was flaming with rage. He flung open the door, turned, and slammed it again, rushing blindly away. The last thing he saw before slamming the door was Barbara on her knees, scurrying to pick up the piece of meat.

Night was dropping fast, and Katterson knew the streets were unsafe. His apartment, he felt, was polluted; he could not go back to it. The problem was to get food. He hadn't eaten in almost two days. He thrust his hands in his pocket and felt the folded slip of paper with Malory's address on it, and, with a wry grimace, realized that this was his only source of food and money. But not yet—not so long as he could hold up his head.

Without thinking he wandered toward the river, toward the huge crater where, Katterson had been told, there once had been the United Nations buildings. The crater was almost a thousand feet deep; the United Nations had been obliterated in the first bombing, back in 2028. Katterson had been just one year old then, the year the war began. The actual fighting and bombing had continued for the next five or six years, until both hemispheres were scarred and burned from combat, and then the long war of attrition had begun. Katterson had turned eighteen in 2045—nine long years, he reflected—and his giant frame made him a natural choice for a soft Army post. In the course of his Army career he had been all over the section of the world he considered his country—the patch of land bounded by the Appalachian radioactive belt on one side, by the Atlantic on the other. The enemy had carefully constructed walls of fire partitioning America into a dozen strips, each completely isolated from the next. An airplane could cross from one to another, if there were any left. But

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science, industry, technology, were dead, Katterson thought wearily, as he stared without seeing at the river. He sat down on the edge of the crater and dangled his feet.

What had happened to the brave new world that had entered the Twenty-First Century with such proud hopes? Here he was, Paul Katterson, probably one of the strongest and tallest men in the country, swinging his legs over a great devastated area, with a gnawing pain in the pit of his stomach. The world was dead, the shiny streamlined world of chrome plating and jet planes. Someday, perhaps, there would be new life. Someday.

Katterson stared at the waters beyond the crater. Somewhere across the seas there were other countries, broken like the rest. And somewhere in the other direction were rolling plains, grass, wheat, wild animals, fenced off by hundreds of miles of radioactive mountains. The War had eaten up the fields and pastures and livestock, had ground all mankind under.

He got up and started to walk back through the lonely streets. It was dark now, and the few gaslights cast a ghostly light, like little eclipsed moons. The fields were dead, and what was left of mankind huddled in the blasted cities, except for the lucky ones in the few Oases scattered by chance through the country. New York was a city of skeletons, each one scrabbling for food, cutting corners and hoping for tomorrow's bread.

A small man bumped into Katterson as he wandered unseeing. Katterson looked down at him and caught him by the arm. A family man, he guessed, hurrying home to his hungry children.

"Excuse me, sir," the little man said, nervously, straining to break Katterson's grip. The fear was obvious on his face; Katterson wondered if the worried little man thought this giant was going to roast him on the spot.

"I won't hurt you," Katterson said. "I'm just looking for food, citizen."

"I have none."

"But I'm starving," Katterson said. "You look like you have a job, some money. Give me some food and I'll be your bodyguard, your slave, anything you want."

"Look, fellow, I have no food to spare. Ouch! Let go of my arm!"

Katterson let go, and watched the little man go dashing away down the street. People always ran away from other people these days, he thought. Malory had made a similar escape.

The streets were dark and empty. Katterson wondered if he would be someone's steak by morning, and he didn't really care. His chest itched suddenly, and he thrust a grimy hand inside his shirt to scratch. The flesh over his pectoral muscles had almost completely been absorbed, and his chest was bony to the touch. He felt his stubbly

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cheeks, noting how tight they were over his jaws.

He turned and headed uptown, skirting around the craters, climbing over the piles of the rubble. At 50th Street a Government jeep came coasting by and drew to a stop. Two soldiers with guns got out.

"Pretty late for you to be strolling, Citizen," one soldier said.

"Looking for some fresh air."

"That all?"

"What's it to you?" Katterson said.

"Not hunting some game too, maybe?"

Katterson lunged at the soldier. "Why, you little punk—"

"Easy, big boy," the other soldier said, pulling him back. "We were just joking."

"Fine joke," Katterson said. "You can afford to joke—all you have to do to get food is wear a monkey suit. I know how it is with you Army guys."

"Not any more," the second soldier said.

"Who are you kidding?" Katterson said. "I was a Regular Army man for seven years, until they broke up our outfit in '52. I know what's happening."

"Hey—what regiment?"

"306th Exploratory, soldier."

"You're not Katterson, Paul Katterson?"

"Maybe I am," Katterson said slowly. He moved closer to the two soldiers. "What of it?"

"You know Mark Leswick?"

"Damned well I do," Katterson said. "But how do you know him?"

"My brother. Used to talk of you all the time—Katterson's the biggest man alive, he'd say. Appetite like an ox."

Katterson smiled. "What's he doing now?"

The other coughed. "Nothing. He and some friends built a raft and tried to float to South America. They were sunk by the Shore Patrol just outside the New York Harbor."

"Oh. Too bad. Fine man, Mark. But he was right about that appetite. I'm hungry."

"So are we, fellow," the soldier said. "They cut off the soldier's dole yesterday."

Katterson laughed, and the echoes rang in the silent street. "Damn them anyway! Good thing they didn't pull that when I was in service; I'd have told them off."

"You can come with us, if you'd like. We'll be off-duty when this patrol is over, and we'll be heading downtown."

"Pretty late, isn't it? What time is it? Where are you going?"

"It's quarter to three," the soldier said, looking at his chronometer. "We're looking for a fellow named Malory; there's a story he has some food for sale, and we just got paid yesterday." He patted his pocket smugly.

Katterson blinked. "You know what kind of stuff Malory's selling?"

"Yeah," the other said. "So

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what? When you're hungry, you're hungry, and it's better eat than starve. I've seen some guys like you—too stubborn to go that low for a meal. But you'll give in, sooner or later, I suppose. I don't know—you look stubborn."

"Yeah," Katterson said, breathing a little harder than usual. "I guess I am stubborn. Or maybe I'm not hungry enough yet. Thanks for the lift, but I'm afraid I am going uptown."

And he turned and trudged off into the darkness.

There was only one friendly place to go.

Hal North was a quiet, bookish man who had come in contact with Katterson fairly often, even though North lived almost four miles uptown, on 114th Street.

Katterson had a standing invitation to come to North at any time of day or night, and, having no place else to go, he headed there. North was one of the few scholars who still tried to pursue knowledge at Columbia, once a citadel of learning. They huddled together in the crumbling wreck of one of the halls, treasuring moldering books and exchanging ideas. North had a tiny apartment in an undamaged building on 114th Street, and he lived surrounded by books and a tiny circle of acquaintances.

Quarter to three, the soldier said. Katterson walked swiftly and easily, hardly noticing the blocks as they flew past. He reached North's apartment just as the sun was beginning to come up, and he knocked cautiously on the door. One knock, two, then another a little harder.

Footsteps within. "Who's there?" in a tired, high-pitched voice.

"Paul Katterson," Katterson whispered. "You awake?"

North slid the door open. "Katterson! Come on in! What brings you up here?"

"You said I could come whenever I needed to. I need to." Katterson sat down on the edge of North's bed. "I haven't eaten in two days, pretty near."

North chuckled. "You came to the right place, then. Wait—I'll fix you some bread and oleo. We still have some left."

"You sure you can spare it, Hal?"

North opened a cupboard and took out a loaf of bread, and Katterson's mouth began to water. "Of course, Paul. I don't eat much anyway, and I've been storing most of my food doles. You're welcome to whatever's here, for as long as you like."

A sudden feeling of love swept through Katterson, a strange, consuming emotion which seemed to enfold all mankind for a moment, then withered and died away. "Thanks, Hal. Thanks."

He turned and looked at the tattered, thumb-stained book lying open on North's bed. Katterson let his eye wander down the tiny print, and read softly aloud.

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"The emperor of the sorrowful realm was there,
Out of the girding ice he stood breast-high,
And to his arm alone the giants were
Less comparable than to a giant I."

North brought a little plate of food over to where Katterson was sitting. "I was reading that all night," he said. "Somehow I had thought of browsing through it again, and I started it last night and read till you came."

"Dante's *Inferno*," Katterson said. "Very appropriate. Someday I'd like to look through it again too. I've read so little, you know; soldiers don't get much education."

"Whenever you want to read, Paul, the books are still here." North smiled, a pale smile on his wan face. He pointed to the bookcase, where grubby, frayed books leaned at all angles. "Look, Paul: Rabelais, Joyce, Dante, Enright, Voltaire, Aeschylus, Homer, Shakespeare. They're all here, Paul, the most precious things of all. They're my old friends; those books have been my breakfasts and my lunches and my suppers many times when no food was to be had for any price."

"We may be depending on them alone, Hal. Have you been out much these days?"

"No," North said. "I haven't been outdoors in over a week. Henriks has been picking up my food doles and bringing them here, and borrowing books. He came by yesterday—no, two days ago—to get my volume of Greek tragedies. He's writing a new opera, based on a play of Aeschylus."

"Poor crazy Henriks," Katterson said. "Why does he keep on writing music when there are no orchestras, no records, no concerts? He can't even hear the stuff he writes."

North opened the window and the morning air edged in. "Oh, but he does, Paul. He hears his music in his mind, and that satisfies him. It doesn't really matter; he'll never live to hear it played."

"The doles have been cut off," Katterson said.

"I know."

"The people out there are eating each other. I saw a man killed for food yesterday—butchered just like a cow."

North shook his head and straightened a tangled, whitened lock. "So soon? I thought it would take longer than that, once the food ran out."

"They're hungry, Hal."

"Yes, they're hungry. So are you. In a day or so my supply up here will be gone, and I'll be hungry too. But it takes more than hunger to break down the taboo against eating flesh. Those people out there have given up their last shred of humanity now; they've suffered every degradation there is, and they can't sink any lower. Sooner or later we'll come to realize that,

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you and I, and then we'll be out there hunting for meat too."

"Ha!"

"Don't look so shocked, Paul." North smiled patiently. "Wait a couple of days, till we've eaten the bindings of my books, till we're finished chewing our shoes. The thought turns my stomach, too, but it's inevitable. Society's doomed; the last restraints are breaking now. We're more stubborn than the rest, or maybe we're just fussier about our meals. But our day will come too."

"I don't believe it," Katterson said, rising.

"Sit down. You're tired, and you're just a skeleton yourself now. What happened to my big, muscular friend Katterson? Where are his muscles now?" North reached up and squeezed the big man's biceps. "Skin, bones, what else? You're burning down, Paul, and when the spark is finally out you'll give in too."

"Maybe you're right, Hal. As soon as I stop thinking of myself as human, as soon as I get hungry enough and dead enough, I'll be out there hunting like the rest. But I'll hold out as long as I can."

He sank back on the bed and slowly turned the yellowing pages of Dante.

Henriks came back the next day, wild-eyed and haggard, to return the book of Greek plays, saying the times were not ripe for Aeschylus. He borrowed a slim volume of poems by Ezra Pound. North forced some food on Henriks, who took it gratefully and without any show of diffidence. Then he left, staring oddly at Katterson.

Others came during the day—Komar, Goldman, de Metz—all men who, like Henriks and North, remembered the old days, before the long war. They were pitiful skeletons, but the flame of knowledge burned brightly in each of them. North introduced Katterson to them, and they looked wonderingly at his still-powerful frame before pouncing avidly on the books.

But soon they stopped coming. Katterson would stand at the window and watch below for hours, and the empty streets remained empty. It was now four days since the last food had arrived from Trenton Oasis. Time was running out.

A light snowfall began the next day, and continued throughout the long afternoon. At the evening meal North pulled his chair over to the cupboard, balanced precariously on its arm, and searched around in the cupboard for a few moments. Then he turned to Katterson.

"I'm even worse off than Mother Hubbard," he said. "At least she had a dog."

"Huh?"

"I was referring to an incident in a children's book," North said. "What I meant was we have no more food."

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"None?" Katterson asked dully.

"Nothing at all." North smiled faintly. Katterson felt the emptiness stirring in his stomach, and leaned back, closing his eyes.

Neither of them ate at all the next day. The snow continued to filter lightly down. Katterson spent most of the time staring out the little window, and he saw a light, clean blanket of snow covering everything in sight. The snow was unbroken.

The next morning Katterson arose and found North busily tearing the binding from his copy of the Greek plays. With a sort of amazement Katterson watched North put the soiled red binding into a pot of boiling water.

"Oh, you're up? I'm just preparing breakfast."

The binding was hardly palatable, but they chewed it to a soft pulp anyway, and swallowed the pulp just to give their tortured stomachs something to work on. Katterson retched as he swallowed his final mouthful.

One day of eating bookbindings.

"The city is dead," Katterson said from the window without turning around. "I haven't seen anyone come down this street yet. The snow is everywhere."

North said nothing.

"This is crazy, Hal," Katterson said suddenly. "I'm going out to get some food."

"Where?"

"I'll walk down Broadway and see what I can find. Maybe there'll be a stray dog. I'll look. We can't hold out forever up here."

"Don't go, Paul."

Katterson turned savagely. "Why? Is it better to starve up here without trying than to go down and hunt? You're a little man; you don't need food as much as I do. I'll go down to Broadway; maybe there'll be something. At least we can't be any worse off than now."

North smiled. "Go ahead, then."

"I'm going."

He buckled on his knife, put on all the warm clothes he could find, and made his way down the stairs. He seemed to float down, so lightheaded was he from hunger. His stomach was a tight hard knot.

The streets were deserted. A light blanket of snow lay everywhere, mantling the twisted ruins of the city. Katterson headed for Broadway, leaving tracks in the unbroken snow, and began to walk downtown.

At 96th Street and Broadway he saw his first sign of life, some people at the following corner. With mounting excitement he headed for 95th Street, but pulled up short.

There was a body sprawled over the snow, newly dead. And two boys of about twelve were having a duel to the death for its possession, while a third circled warily around them. Katterson watched them for a moment, and then crossed the street and walked on.

He no longer minded the snow

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and the solitude of the empty city. He maintained a steady, even pace, almost the tread of a machine. The world was crumbling fast around him, and his recourse lay in this solitary trek.

He turned back for a moment and looked behind him. There were his footsteps, the long trail stretching back and out of sight, the only marks breaking the even whiteness. He ticked off the empty blocks.

90th. 87th. 85th. At 84th he saw a blotch of color on the next block, and quickened his pace. When he got to close range, he saw it was a man lying on the snow. Katterson trotted lightly to him and stood over him.

He was lying face-down. Katterson bent and carefully rolled him over. His cheeks were still red; evidently he had rounded the corner and died just a few minutes before. Katterson stood up and looked around. In the window of the house nearest him, two pale faces were pressed against the pane, watching greedily.

He whirled suddenly to face a small, swarthy man standing on the other side of the corpse. They stared for a moment, the little man and the giant. Katterson noted dimly the other's burning eyes and set expression. Two more people appeared, a ragged woman and a boy of eight or nine. Katterson moved closer to the corpse and made a show of examining it for identification, keeping a wary eye on the little tableau facing him.

Another man joined the group, and another. Now there were five, all standing silently in a semi-circle. The first man beckoned, and from the nearest house came two women and still another man. Katterson frowned; something unpleasant was going to happen.

A trickle of snow fluttered down. The hunger bit into Katterson like a red-hot knife, as he stood there uneasily waiting for something to happen. The body lay fence-like between them.

The tableau dissolved into action in an instant. The small swarthy man made a gesture and reached for the corpse; Katterson quickly bent and scooped the dead man up. Then they were all around him, screaming and pulling at the body.

The swarthy man grabbed the corpse's arm and started to tug, and a woman reached up for Katterson's hair. Katterson drew up his arm and swung as hard as he could, and the small man left the ground and flew a few feet, collapsing into a huddled heap in the snow.

All of them were around him now, snatching at the corpse and at Katterson. He fought them off with his one free hand, with his feet, with his shoulders. Weak as he was and outnumbered, his size remained a powerful factor. His fist connected with someone's jaw and there was a rewarding crack; at the same time he lashed back with his foot and felt contact with breaking ribs.

"Get away!" he shouted. "Get

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away! This is mine! Away!" The first woman leaped at him, and he kicked at her and sent her reeling into the snowdrifts. "Mine! This is mine!"

They were even more weakened by hunger than he was. In a few moments all of them were scattered in the snow except the little boy, who came at Katterson determinedly, made a sudden dash, and leaped on Katterson's back.

He hung there, unable to do anything more than cling. Katterson ignored him, and took a few steps, carrying both the corpse and the boy, while the heat of battle slowly cooled inside him. He would take the corpse back uptown to North; they could cut it in pieces without much trouble. They would live on it for days, he thought. They would—

He realized what had happened. He dropped the corpse and staggered a few steps away, and sank down into the snow, bowing his head. The boy slipped off his back, and the little knot of people timidly converged on the corpse and bore it off triumphantly, leaving Katterson alone.

"Forgive me," he muttered hoarsely. He licked his lips nervously, shaking his head. He remained there kneeling for a long time, unable to get up.

"No. No forgiveness. I can't fool myself; I'm one of them now," he said. He arose and stared at his hands, and then began to walk. Slowly, methodically, he trudged along, fumbling with the folded piece of paper in his pocket, knowing now that he had lost everything.

The snow had frozen in his hair, and he knew his head was white from snow—the head of an old man. His face was white too. He followed along Broadway for a while, then cut to Central Park West. The snow was unbroken before him. It lay covering everything, a sign of the long winter setting in.

"North was right," he said quietly to the ocean of white that was Central Park. He looked at the heaps of rubble seeking cover beneath the snow. "I can't hold out any longer." He looked at the address—Malory, 218 West 42nd Street—and continued onward, almost numb with the cold.

His eyes were narrowed to slits, and lashes and head were frosted and white. Katterson's throat throbbed in his mouth, and his lips were clamped together by hunger. 70th Street, 65th. He zigzagged and wandered, following Columbus Avenue, Amsterdam Avenue for a while. Columbus, Amsterdam—the names were echoes from a past that had never been.

What must have been an hour passed, and another. The streets were empty. Those who were left stayed safe and starving inside, and watched from their windows the strange giant stalking alone through the snow. The sun had almost dropped from the sky as he reached 50th Street. His hunger had all but

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abated now; he felt nothing, knew just that his goal lay ahead. He faced forward, unable to go anywhere but ahead.

Finally 42nd Street, and he turned down toward where he knew Malory was to be found. He came to the building. Up the stairs, now, as the darkness of night came to flood the streets. Up the stairs, up another flight, another. Each step was a mountain, but he pulled himself higher and higher.

At the fifth floor Katterson reeled and sat down on the edge of the steps, gasping. A liveried footman passed, his nose in the air, his green coat shimmering in the half-light. He was carrying a roasted pig with an apple in its mouth, on a silver tray. Katterson lurched forward to seize the pig. His groping hands passed through it, and pig and footman exploded like bubbles and drifted off through the silent halls.

Just one more flight. Sizzling meat on a stove, hot, juicy, tender meat filling the hole where his stomach had once been. He picked up his legs carefully and set them down, and came to the top at last. He balanced for a moment at the top of the stairs, nearly toppled backwards but seized the banister at the last second, and then pressed forward.

There was the door. He saw it, heard loud noise coming from behind it. A feast was going on, a banquet, and he ached to join it. Down the hall, turn left, pound on the door.

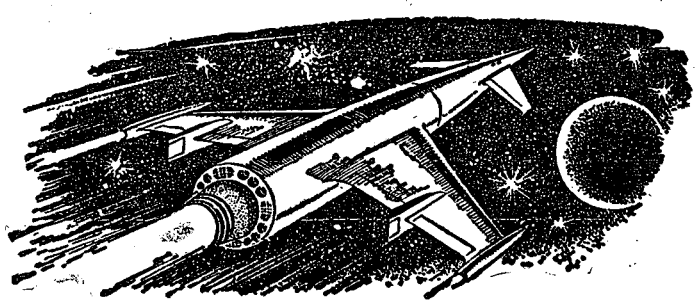
Noise growing closer.

"Malory! Malory! It's me, Katterson, big Katterson! I've come to you! Open up, Malory!"

The handle began to turn.

"Malory! Malory!"

Katterson sank to his knees in the hall and fell forward on his face when the door opened at last.



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shapes in the sky

by . . . Civilian Saucer Intelligence

If UFO are hallucinations —what is the explanation of the frequently reported dramatic "radiation burns"?

IN OUR two previous articles, we have discussed the Air Force's brush-off of five significant UFO reports from the November, 1957, wave of sightings; and have referred to a dozen or more reports during that period in which electrical effects of one kind or another were reported.

In concluding our discussion of this extraordinary period, we will refer to several cases in which persons were burned—or claimed to have been burned—while watching UFOs.

We have already mentioned the Orogrande, New Mexico incident of November 4 (*F.U.*, May) in which James Stokes received a "sunburn" after watching a "flying egg" make several passes over the highway. That Stokes did, in fact, have some kind of a burn has been reliably verified by veteran Ufologist Coral Lorenzen of Alamogordo, who saw the witness—an acquaintance—on the evening of the same day the incident took place.

One may certainly question whether the burn was an unnatural acquisition as claimed, or was merely the result of remaining too long

Civilian Saucer Intelligence of New York discuss, in their latest monthly column, written specially for this magazine, the mysterious "sunburn" received by some of the people who've come close to a UFO. CSI, a New York research group, publishes a newsletter and holds occasional public meetings on UFO's.

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in the sun; but in spite of the Air Force's remarks to the contrary, the fact is that James Stokes *had* a burn on the evening of the day he saw the "egg," and that two days later this "sunburn" had disappeared.

At an unspecified time on November 6—the crest of the November wave—a sensational incident took place near Merom, Indiana (30 miles south of Terre Haute, on the Wabash River that bounds Indiana on the west). Rene Gilham, a 33-year-old ironworker, was in one of the buildings on his farm when he noticed an unusual light outdoors. Stepping out he saw that a brightly-luminous object, which he estimated as 40 feet in diameter and 1000 feet up, was hovering overhead. From this object there "beamed out" a light which "bathed his farm with an eerie, penetrating light." Gilham stood staring at this object for about ten minutes, during which time it was temporarily joined by a smaller object. Then the larger object also departed—"went straight up and headed west"; as it did so, the light became more intense, and it emitted "a whirring noise like a high-speed electric motor gaining revolutions." Gilham's wife and children, and his father-in-law in the adjacent house, also saw the UFO, but did not watch it continuously. "The other members of the family verified the fact that the object was so bright that it lighted the entire surroundings."

This light that "beamed out" from the bottom of the object is strongly reminiscent of the object seen the same night at Lake Baskatong, Quebec (last month's article). But there was a sequel—which introduced a new element: *radiation injury.*

On the day after this incident, Gilham's face began to itch and redden, and that night the "sunburn" was so painful that he went to a doctor the following morning. The physician, Dr. Joseph Dukes, found that Gilham's condition was not a rash such as might be caused by poison ivy or allergy, but a real burn, "similar to the burns that are inflicted on the face and eyes when working near an arc welder without a face mask." Gilham said that he had not been near a welder for three weeks. Two days later, "his condition worsened," and he was taken to Mary Sherman Hospital in nearby Sullivan. Hospital staff members refused to tell reporters anything about the case, and permitted no visitors; more remarkably, they refused to say by whose orders the patient was being held incommunicado. (The Terre Haute *Tribune,* after mentioning this, adds that "military authorities" had been informed about the case.) However, Dr. Dukes said on the 11th that "the swelling about the eyes and reddening of the skin had lessened today," and that he expected Gilham to be released the next day. We do not know whether he was or not; our only sources on

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this are the Sullivan *Times,* 11/11, and Terre Haute *Tribune,* 11/12.

It may be interesting to add that on the same evening Gilham saw his UFO, numerous persons in Sullivan watched a glowing orange-red object in the direction of the southwest, at approximately 6:30 p.m. Because of the time and direction, these reports are highly suspect as misidentifications of the setting Venus; however, Merom is also southwest of Sullivan, and several observers described seeing a smaller, red-cast object move away from the larger object and finally disappear to the east. As Gilham had reported a similar description, it is quite possible that the Sullivan reports are corroborations of his sighting at Merom; but since we do not know at what time Gilham saw the Merom object, this possibility remains tentative.

One may legitimately wonder whether we are perhaps dealing with an hysterical personality, and self-inflicted injuries: Ruppelt's findings on the "Florida scoutmaster" story of 1952 (*F.U.,* Jan.) should be borne in mind. But inasmuch as the presence of the UFO was confirmed by other witnesses, Rene Gilham's radiation burn looks a good deal like a genuine one. If it was, the similarity to James Stokes's "sunburn" does much to add credibility to Stokes's story.

Several hundred miles to the northeast, that same night, an incident even more remarkable than Gilham's took place. Although no burns were inflicted upon the observer, it should be included because of the radioactivity alleged to have been detected. At about 11:30 p.m. (EST), Olden Moore, a 28-year-old plasterer, was driving home from Painesville, in northeastern Ohio, and was just west of Montville when he saw a bright object in the southern sky moving from right to left, or eastward, ahead of him. He thought at first it was a bright meteor.

"It stopped when it got to the center of my side of the windshield, and then it split into two pieces. One part went straight upward. The part that remained seemed brighter than ever and kept getting bigger. When it got to be about the size of a sheet of paper (8½ x 11"), I pulled the car into a side road and got out. It seemed to be headed straight at the car. I had no idea what it was. The color changed, as it approached, from bright white to a green haze, and then to blue-green as it stopped about 200 feet above the field. I didn't hear any sound until it started to settle slowly to the ground. Then I noticed a whirring sound, something like an electric meter, only a little deeper." The object landed about 500 feet away.

"I stood by the car watching the thing for some 15 minutes before I decided to walk toward it." He found it to be a circular affair, shaped like a covered dish about 50 feet in diameter and 15 feet high, surmounted by a sharp steeple-like

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cone extending its overall height to 20-30 feet. Around it was a blue-green haze which alternately dimmed and brightened.

"The moonlight made it possible to distinguish the object itself from the haze. When the haze was dim, whatever the thing was made of looked the same as those mirrored sun-glasses—the kind where the outside of the glasses look like mirrors, and you can't see the wearer's eyes. I didn't see any windows. Up until Wednesday night I figured, as most people do, that flying saucer sighters belonged in the booby hatch. Now, I do not doubt them at all." (Lake County *Republican Herald*, 11/12.)

The Chardon (O.) *Geauga Record* (11/21) gives some more details.

Moore said he had approached only about halfway to the saucer, then "stopped and thought about getting witnesses, and returned to the car." Finding no one on the road, he drove five miles to his home and returned with his wife, but of course the object had departed. Next morning Geauga County Sheriff Louis Robusky was notified and an investigation was begun. Lake County Civilian Defense director Kenneth Locke searched the landing area and found six "footprints" that "came from nowhere and went nowhere." He described a sort of heel print, and some little holes in the ground, "like golf shoes would make. But nobody around there has golf shoes." (Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, 11/8.)

According to the Cleveland *Press* (11/8), near the spiked "footprints" were found two holes in the ground three feet deep. "They were not like post holes, an observer said: they were perfect." One assumes from this that they were about six inches in diameter but had smooth walls, as if earth samples had been removed with a cylindrical core borer. However, this thought-provoking piece of evidence is not mentioned by our other sources.

Locke returned to headquarters and got a Geiger counter. "When we returned, we got a reading of about 150 microroentgens (presumably *per hour*, above the normal background of about 15—*auths.*) in the center of an area about 50 feet in diameter, tapering to 20 or 30 microroentgens at the perimeter." A few hours later, "the meter showed only 20-25 microroentgens in the center and no reading at all in the perimeter. This indicated that the activity was not caused by minerals in the ground. We concluded that something must have been here."

These radioactivity measurements, *if* they can be taken at face value, imply something startling. According to the Cleveland *Press* (11/8), the first reading was taken at 3 p.m. the next day (about 15 hours after the object's departure) and the second was taken only two hours later, by which time the activ-

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ity had decayed from 150 to 20-25 microroentgens per hour. This implies a half-life of only 42 minutes —a very "hot" isotope indeed. Since a 15-hour time lapse would represent nearly twenty-two 42-minute half-lives, the original radiation level must have been about 600 roentgens per hour! (The lethal dose for man is approximately 500 roentgens.) And this refers only to the radioactivity left by the saucer on the *ground* where it rested—not to the radiation emitted by the UFO itself. Knowing something of the frequent inaccuracy of newspaper data, we would like not to assign too much weight to this deduction; but it seems possible that it was just as well for Olden Moore that he approached the UFO no closer than he did.

The Cleveland *Plain Dealer* (11/8) reported some odd circumstances which, as presented, seem significantly confirmatory of Moore's story:

"Mrs. Mildred Wenzel, whose auto had been parked outside all night about half a mile from where Moore said he saw the thing, was driving to Chardon to talk to Sheriff Robusky about strange pockmarks she had discovered in its roof and windshield. When she drove by the field and saw the sheriff and Locke working with the Geiger counter, she stopped to find out what was going on. When he heard her story, Locke ran the counter over her car. It measured 35-40 roentgens." (This is probably *micro*roentgens—*auths.*) Mrs. Wenzel said she did not see the object, but "there was something funny going on last night; I couldn't get any of the TV stations on my set. They were all blurred. I finally turned it off and went to bed."

But the Moore sighting, remarkable enough in itself, also had a remarkable sequel. According to his wife, Moore told her on the evening of November 14 that he was going away. "When I asked him where, he said he wouldn't tell me. I was so mad I asked him what I was supposed to do if one of the children died, or something." On the morning of the 16th he returned. His wife bruited it about the neighborhood that he had been to Washington. Questioned about this by the *Geauga Record* (11/21), he "would not comment, claiming he is sworn to secrecy. He did disclose the times he left and returned, saying 'I guess they can't do any more than throw me in jail for telling you that.' Of his wife he said, 'Sometimes she talks too much.' He reported he was authorized to say only that he had talked to 'high officials.' He added, 'I will say this, though; most of the people I talked to seemed to think these objects are not made by man.'" (One wonders how much of a "secret" remains after these artless disclosures!)

As with a "contact" claim, we are now confronted with allegations so far-reaching that we can hardly

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accept them without knowing more than we do about the claimant's reputation for reliability, and we cannot help wondering whether the whole thing might not be a publicity-seeker's deliberate mystification. At present, the story of Olden Moore must be adjudged *either* a very significant case or a well-carried-out hoax; we do not know which it is.

On November 10, four days after Olden Moore's reported encounter with a UFO, a similar incident occurred just twelve miles north of Montville, Ohio in the town of Madison, on Lake Erie. It was a cold night, and at 1:25 a.m. (EST), young Mrs. Leita Kuhn had gone out to build a fire in her garage to keep her Doberman pinschers warm. "When I came out, I saw a huge object in the air behind my garage, about 100 feet up. It was 35 to 40 feet across—as big as a house—shaped like an acorn—and very bright. About halfway up there looked as if there might be windows around it, but the light was so bright I really couldn't say for sure. At the bottom it looked like some sort of exhaust. It looked like a large heat lamp in the air. I was not more than 100 feet from it." Almost hypnotized by this weird sight, she watched it, according to her account, for half an hour. "I did not feel any heat from it, but for some reason I was not aware of being cold, though all I had on was a very light sweater with the sleeves rolled up. I did not notice any odor nor did I hear any noise. But while I was watching it, my hand seemed to be going up in front of my face for no reason at all, and my head kept going down. Finally I went in the house to get someone else to see it, and when I came out it was gone."

Mrs. Kuhn's neighbors laughed when they heard the story, which did not become public at the time. But "a few days later, a body rash and some failing in her vision were noticed," and she went to a doctor. "He said that my eyes look as though they had radiation burns, and that I must have had a great shock for this rash on my arms and legs to draw blood," she said later. Finally, on the 25th, the incident became known to Civil Defense director Kenneth Locke—the same man involved in the investigation of Olden Moore's reported sighting. Mrs. Kuhn's report appeared in the Painesville (O.) *Telegraph* of 11/27.

However, before we take it as proven that Mrs. Kuhn must have received a dose of radiation from the UFO, two points should be noted. There was apparently no skin burn on her face (as in the otherwise similar Gilham case); and no mention is made of nausea, invariably the first symptom of typical radiation sickness. On the 29th, a blood count was run at Geneva Memorial Hospital: it showed no evidence of the white-cell damage characteristic of radia-

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tion sickness. (Cleveland *Plain Dealer,* 12/1.)

We must conclude, then, that whatever caused Mrs. Kuhn's rash, it was not radiation; and any eye injury, it would seem, must have been due to the brightness of the light. However, there may be something here that is unfamiliar to us.

In concluding our comments on afflictions resulting from nearby observations of UFOs, we refer to two not-very-recent cases in which such effects have been reported. The first, occurring during the wave of sightings in Ohio in August, 1955, was reported directly to veteran UFO investigator Leonard Stringfield, of Cincinnati. Although the observer suffered no direct burns, his eyesight, as in Mrs. Kuhn's case, was impaired severely enough to warrant medical attention.

The incident took place on August 6, 1955. The witness, requesting anonymity because of fear of ridicule, resided in northern Cincinnati and reported the following: at approximately 1 a.m. he was awakened by his dog, which was setting up a commotion outside. Investigating, he discovered a brilliant white oval-shaped object, about 15 feet wide, resting on the ground at the end of his driveway, about 90 feet away. His estimate of the size was based on the width of the driveway. The object remained motionless for about five seconds, during which he watched a distinct pulsation, so severe as to seriously irritate his eyes. Then the object rose very abruptly and silently toward the northwest and vanished. The following day, his eyes were extremely sore and he had to consult a doctor for relief. (C.R.I.F.O. *Orbit,* 9/2/55, Vol. II, No. 6.)

The second incident occurred even earlier and bears a remarkable similarity to the reports of James Stokes, Rene Gilham and Leita Kuhn. On the night of April 20, 1950, Jack Robertson, a then 28-year-old Lufkin, Texas pharmacist, was driving alone about nine miles west of town when he noticed a round object "about eight feet in diameter" some 200 feet ahead of him. Curious, he stopped his car and got out to get a better look at it. The object drew closer, and "gave off a red glow." He described the bottom of the object as "rounded, like a globe." He said it appeared to be made of aluminum, but that darkness prevented a detailed observation. For about five minutes he watched it as it hovered overhead, not closer than 20 feet away. Then suddenly it took off with a "whooshing roar" and was quickly out of sight. As the object took off, Robertson saw sparks being emitted from a slot in the bottom of the thing, and about five minutes later, he felt a burning sensation on his face. The following day, when he gave his account to the Lufkin *Daily News,* it was noted by the reporters that Robertson's face had a reddish cast resembling a sunburn. "I'm not a drink-

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ing man and I hadn't been drinking," he told them.

As far as we are able to tell, there are no other references in our records of similar incidents, although this does not mean that no others exist. It is particularly striking that three such reports of actual burns should be brought forth at the same time—during one of the most significant sighting waves in the history of flying saucers.

Next month, as a welcomed change of diet, we will introduce to you a guest columnist, Richard Hall of New Orleans, a UFO researcher who has devoted a great deal of time and effort in his pursuit of a factual and logical investigation of this perplexing subject.

PROBLEMS OF SPACE TRAVEL

THE SUCCESSFUL LAUNCHING of the Navy Vanguard satellite has tended to obscure the reality that there is still immensely much to learn before Man can hope to fly into Outer Space with any hope of returning.

The problems are both physical and psychological, perhaps more so the latter, as has been pointed out by Major General Dan C. Ogle, surgeon general of the Air Force, in a recent article in the *Armed Forces Medical Journal*. Particularly important, says General Ogle, is the "break-off phenomenon," the feeling of confusion and helplessness as you approach the limits of this planet's gravitational pull. This is a sensation that is already being reported by pilots and which may become serious when masses of soldiers, eventually, have to be transported by rockets at great heights and speeds.

Another problem, studied by the doctors at the Naval School of Aviation Medicine at Pensacola, Florida, is believed due in part to "confinement in a sealed cabin, traveling in a lonesome void, a by-product of isolated monotony."

"We occasionally hear," General Ogle wrote, "of vague yet disturbing and possibly fatal episodes of fascination or hypnotic reactions resulting from target or instrument concentration. Similar popular explanations are given for the occasional disappearance of skin divers, men in another environment foreign to normal human experience."

A further problem is represented by the weird light conditions. At roughly 75 miles, the scattering of visible light by dust and molecules ceases, and the so-called "twilight of space" is entered. The stars are visible at all times, with the objects in sunlight dazzlingly bright against the blackness of shade. At 75 miles the transfer of sound by the atmosphere also ceases, producing the utter silence of space.

In other words, the future space traveler must be all that the most highly trained aviator is today—and capable of surviving much more.

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children's hour

by . . . Wallace Edmondson

The man who writes this was present at the greatest disaster that was to befall Man on this Earth.

I WAS there when it happened. It was a thing of quiet terror, and in its own way, beautiful.

The United Nations building stands on the edge of the East River. It is an incredibly thin, wondrous-appearing structure, all glass and fine stonework. Beside it is a smaller building, the General Assembly building. If you were to look down from a window in one of the offices of a building on, say, East 45th Street, the top of the General Assembly building might look to you like a fat man with goggles in a bathtub. The dome and stacks do it very nicely.

But the Secretariat Building, that nearly-unbroken face of windows that reflects back the Manhattan skyline on most days, is nothing humorous.

In it, the work of the world is done. In it, the plans and dreams and frustrations of a billion men and women are studied and catalogued and interoffice memoed. In that building I work.

For the record—and there will be a record, I'm certain—my name is Wallace Edmondson. I am an interpreter. I speak three languages in addition to English. I speak Ital-

"Edmondson" describes this as more of a pastiche than anything else. Yes, it has social consciousness and it is not an adequate story. He agrees. "But it is a fairy tale in the undiluted, old-fashioned sense of the phrase, and it does indeed have a message, if for no one else—at least for me. . . ."

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ian, French and German, all quite well. My job with the UN has been a simple one, nothing romantic, nothing full of intrigue and disaster. I have never been outside the United States, and so my curiosity about the rest of the world has gone untended, save for my information culled out of periodicals and the men around me.

Unfortunately, I was present at the greatest disaster that ever befell man on Earth. I will tell you about it, for there is truth in what I say, and perhaps truth will help.

God knows—nothing else will now.

The General Assembly that day—it was a Thursday, the 17th of December, 1959—was a madhouse. The agenda was up to its title page in trouble. We had ten different, imperative, conflicts on our hands, and any one of them might be the one to start a world conflagration the likes of which man had never seen. It would make World War II seem like a street fight.

The world had been teetering on the razor-edge of war for years now; Korea had fanned the flames; when Communist China grabbed Japan it set both sides of the world at the ready. There had been idle, scattered bombings across the Poles, and even into the DEW Line area. The United States, in turn, had sent atomic subs to within miles of the Russian seaport of Leningrad and had shelled the coast defenses there. Somehow, the Lord only knew how, war had been averted, and the cold, slightly warm war went back to simmering.

It had been as though two great giants were going mad, and as if a bugle had sounded, the little giants went mad, also. If there was going to be war, then all the little countries, the secondary powers, wanted their shares of the festival cakes in advance.

So everyone attacked everyone else. The planet became a great battlefield, with every man's neighbor turned against him. Israel was bloody. Iraq and the United Arab Republic had united and were striking out on all sides. From South Africa to Libya, from Rio de Oro to Italian Somaliland, the continent was aflame with black man and white tearing at one another's throats.

In Europe, Russia had overrun Sweden, Norway and Finland without effort. England lay quaking as across the North Sea the enemy readied itself.

Madness prevailed. Men who had formerly been cool and logical, now screamed for the death and destruction of the men who would kill *them* if given the chance. There was the fever of segregationist violence in the South and up North there was the faint crackling warning of a breakdown in industry from too much defense spending and munitions making. Swing shifts had gone back to reality, and with the satellites circling the globe—all fifty of them—there was al-

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ways an eye watching every spot of land on the globe.

It was more than tension that ruled the UN that day, it was a sense of impending terror and death that would overrun the world like nothing had since the yellow hordes of Genghis Khan. Every man there was stark of face; every face there held threats and warnings and accusations and most of all—fear.

The Secretary-General—a Latvian named Rezekne—used his gavel, and the session was brought to order. I won't trouble with the affairs that were taken up during the first two hours, except to note that the Russian delegation made a surprise move and did *not* walk out when the Ethiopian representative made his appeal for justice and peace for his land. What happened during those first two hours does not matter any longer. For this is what happened.

I was translating M. Louperc's harangue against the German Triumvirate, a few minutes into the third hour of the session, when we all heard a great sound from the hall outside the chamber. I was not alone in hearing it, for heads began to turn in the delegations as the sound grew louder. M. Louperc stopped speaking, and turned to the men beside him for some explanation. I saw Montgomery of England spread his hands in confusion. I took off my earphones, and stood up so I could see through my booth better, and just then, the huge doors at the rear of the chamber flew open, and they came in, by the hundreds.

I might have expected anything.

Striking workers, or invading Martians or conquering armies, any of them might have seemed apropos. But not what came through that door.

Children.

Children.

Children.

Of all sizes and colors, of all dress and face, all different, all walking or skipping or marching or hopping as they flooded into the General Assembly chamber. Some time I will ponder at length on how they got together, for there were obviously Berber tribes-children and French schoolgirls and fur-clothed children from Lappland and little imitation Russian cossacks from the Steppes in that great herd. How they got together, perhaps no one will ever know; how they got to the UN buildings, perhaps no one will ever know.

But there they were, and they were jammed into the aisles with their faces quite clean, and their eyes quite bright, and their little hands quite still.

They were quietly terrible. For these were not the children we had known; there was no singing among them, and no whispering, and no giggling between the little bang-haired girls, and no shying of eyes and no shuffling of feet.

They stood very, very still, and

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they looked at the Secretary-General.

Then one of them came forward. I tell this story for I knew the child who came forward. My name is Wallace Edmondson, and the child was mine. My son, Barry. Ten years old; who had been reading comic books the night before, and—yes, now that I thought of it—looking at his toybox full of guns and war weapons with a strange light in his eyes. My son, Barry, who now walked forward and mounted the steps to the speaker's platform.

I could not speak. I could only watch, as all the others watched, as this one child from so many, went to the front of the chamber and climbed those stairs.

When he was behind the speaker's podium, and had taken down the microphone, and had moved aside—for the podium quite blocked him off from sight—he began to speak.

This is what he said . . . and I interpreted into German, as my colleagues interpreted into all other languages.

"We want you to stop fighting. We are scared, and we have waited and waited, but no one will do anything. If you knew how you scare us all the time with your fighting, you wouldn't do it. But you do, and we are here to tell you, if you don't stop right now, right away, we are leaving."

That was all Barry said.

He set down the microphone, and he left the platform, and the children began to mill around as he descended. Then he joined them and as a unit, they left the General Assembly chamber.

In a few minutes, they were gone, as quickly as they had come.

What happened next was pandemonium. A pandemonium of laughter. The Russian delegation began it, and in a few moments it had spread till the entire room was a bonfire of mirth. The Russians begged to speak and when their representative rose he said this was a poor, shabby trick for the Americans to pull, and that it changed no one's mind, except that perhaps the Yankees were more fools than the world had thought.

The US representative accused the Russians.

The Chinese accused the British.

The French accused the Germans.

Bedlam was the order of the day.

And the next day . . .

And the next . . .

But on the fourth day, there was no bedlam, for war broke out in Europe, Africa and Asia, simultaneously. The war did not last long, however. For on the same day, wherever anyone might have been . . . whether in a bathtub, or on a desert, or in a jungle, or on a mountain-top, they heard the sounds.

The great, big, deep sound that was from everywhere, and nowhere and no place at the same time. The sounds that might have been monstrous ships of space, though no one ever saw them, or saw fire trails

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in the sky, or anything else. The sounds that might have been space tearing and shifting and warping to allow passage.

The sounds might have been anything.

Though no one cares too much to find out; no one has been able to think straight since it happened.

For that day, they left.

Where, we do not know. How, we do not know. But they made good their warning. We played the Pied Piper, and we played the wrong tune.

Our children have gone.

It has been a long, long time, and I have not seen my son. It was inevitable that there would be no more sons; that seems to fit, ironically. There had been one Bomb too many.

We have no children, and we miss them, but we haven't too much time to worry about it now. After all, there *is* a war on.

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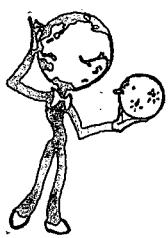

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spacenet

by . . . Robert Andrea

Dum-de-dum-dum! . . .

My name was Joe Lightyear. I was a Detective Sergeant for the Space Coppers. The story I'm about to tell really happened. Only the names have been changed to protect innocent Bug-Eyed-Monsters.

Dum-de-dum-dum! . . .

It all started a few aeons back, in the twenty-first century. I was sitting in my office eating an atom and cheese sandwich when I was interrupted by the familiar ring of the visaphone. I picked up the receiver. "Sergeant Lightyear speaking."

"Lightyear, this is Captain Twilight. One of those Bug-Eyed-Monsters on Venus is acting up again. Get out there and see what you can do."

"Yes, sir. I'll do what I can."

I hung up, put on my spacesuit, and walked down the hall. When I came to room 212, I opened the door. My partner, Fred Yeahyeah, was sitting at his desk. His name wasn't really "Yeahyeah." We just called him that.

"Let's go, Fred," I said. "We've got a job to do."

"Yeahyeahyeah," he answered.

We walked outside, climbed into

When he reached the porch he saw that the Bug-Eyed Monster sitting on the rocking chair was a woman.

Robert Andrea is the pseudonym of a young American, living and working in Japan—not Walt Sheldon, we hasten to add. The writer, who seems to share our very personal reactions to it, has chosen to tell an unusual story in the tempo and style associated with a well-known program.

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our spaceship, and blasted off for Venus.

Dum-de-dum-dum! . . .

But we landed on Mars. I could not understand it. Something had gone wrong.

Fred and I were standing next to our spaceship, trying to figure it out, when a kid walked up to us.

"What's your name, little girl?" I asked, trying to draw her out. She answered immediately. My training was paying off.

"Marzy Canal," she said.

I thought I had the kid tabbed, so I continued the questioning. "What do you know about Bug-Eyed-Monsters?"

"Only what I read in the magazines," she replied.

"Don't try to be smart, kid," I said. "It doesn't pay to be smart." I knew the kid was trying to be smart. I decided to let her go, at least for the time being. "All right, kid. You can go now."

When the kid had left, I turned to Fred. "That kid was trying to be smart," I confided to him.

"Yeahyeahyeah," he answered.

Fred was a smart cop.

We climbed back into our spaceship and blasted off for Venus.

Dum-de-dum-dum! . . .

This time we made it.

I decided to go right to the Bug-Eyed-Monster neighborhood. Fred and I hopped in our portable patrol car and drove toward Flyswatter Avenue.

When we got there, we found a lot of Bug-Eyed-Monsters sitting on their front porches, crying. I pulled up to the curb and stopped the car.

"You wait here, Fred."

"Yeahyeahyeah."

I opened the door, got out of the car, and walked up the pathway leading to one of the homes. When I reached the front porch, I saw that the Bug-Eyed-Monster sitting on the rocking chair was a woman. She was crying like the rest of them.

"What is it, ma'am?" I said. "Why are you crying?"

"Oh, that Georgie Bug-Eyed-Monster," she sobbed. "He's disgracing the neighborhood!"

"Yes, ma'am. I'm just trying to get the facts. What's he doing?"

"He's. . . . He's. . . . Oh, it's—sob—too horrible to talk about!"

"Yes, ma'am. I only want the facts. Just where is Georgie now?"

"I don't—sob—know where he is. None of us do. If only we did, we could make him stop. Please believe me. We don't want Georgie to continue to. . . . Oh, it's—sob—just *too* horrible!!!"

She broke off crying again. I could see that the woman was too emotionally upset to be of further use; so I turned around and went back to the patrol car.

"Fred," I said, "I've got a hunch, just a hunch. Sometimes a hunch pays off and sometimes it doesn't. I'm going back to the spaceship. Keep an eye on things around here until I get back."

"Yeahyeahyeah," Fred murmured.

I drove off, leaving Fred behind.

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When I arrived at the spaceship, I got in and blasted off for Alpha Centauri.

Dum-de-dum-dum! . . .

When I got there, I saw an old Bug-Eyed-Monster sitting on a patch of hydrogen gas. I knew my hunch was going to pay off.

I walked up to him and said, "Are you Georgie's father?"

"Yes," he answered, "but how did you find me?"

"Everyone knows a Bug-Eyed-Monster is the only creature that can survive the terrific heat of Alpha Centauri," I explained, "but you forgot one thing . . ."

"What's that?"

"So can a Space-Copper!"

Dum-de-dum-dum! . . .

When he recovered from the shock, I asked him where his son was.

"I guess there's no use trying to hide it any longer. . . . He's in apartment 32 of the Bug-Eyed-Monster Hotel on Venus."

"Thank you, sir. You won't regret this."

I went back to my spaceship and blasted off for Venus. After I landed on the planet, I made my way to the spot where I had left Fred. He was still there, waiting for me.

"Let's go, Fred."

"Yeahyeahyeah," he said enthusiastically. Fred was always glad to wind up a tough case.

We hopped in the patrol car and drove to the hotel, a few blocks left of Flyswatter Avenue. When we arrived at the hotel, we ran through the lobby and took the elevator to the third floor. We got out and walked to apartment 32. I moved fast because I knew there was nothing to fear.

"All right, Fred. Blast open the door!"

"Yeahyeahyeah."

Fred pulled out his atomic pistol and pointed it at the door. A fraction of a second after he pulled the trigger, the lock disappeared.

I pushed the door open. There, sitting on the bed, was Georgie Bug-Eyed-Monster. "All right, son," I said, "the game's up. I'm taking you in on a section six-nineteen—trying to be friendly with humans."

I turned to Fred. "All right, put the tentaclecuffs on him," I ordered.

"Nonono."

I looked at Fred. I couldn't believe my ears! He still had the atomic pistol in his hand. He raised his arm and fired at me!

Dum-de-dum-dum! . . .

Here I am, living on Flyswatter Avenue. I heard the Space-Coppers finally picked up Fred the other day. It's about time. He's being held on a section twenty-four—turning a human into a Bug-Eyed-Monster. They got Georgie too, a couple of weeks ago.

Being a Bug-Eyed-Monster isn't too bad. I really enjoy scaring people! I can't understand that Georgie. . . . Why would anyone want to be a *friendly* Bug-Eyed-Monster?

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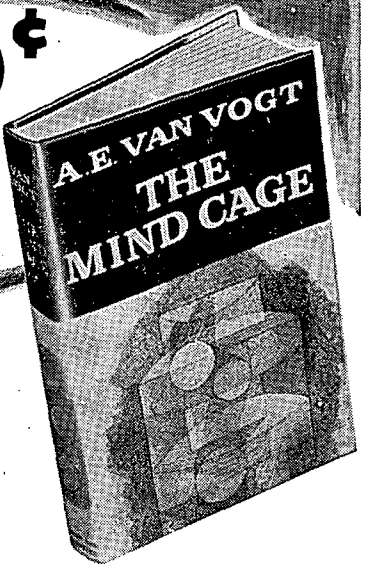

—Continued from Back Cover

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